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September 2008

WELCOME TO a very special edition of *World Soccer*. This is our biggest ever guide to the European club competitions. We've devoted almost 50 pages to our detailed analysis of the 144 teams in the Champions League and UEFA Cup.

With the Champions League, it's been a case of ever decreasing circles in recent seasons. Every year, the number of teams with a genuine chance of winning the competition has declined, to the point where nobody has been surprised by the presence of three English clubs in the semi-finals for the past two seasons. However, this year, with the return of Juventus and Bayern Munich, the determination of Real Madrid to win a 10th European Cup and the ambition of a Jose Mourinho-led Internazionale, it is harder to predict who will contest the Final in Rome next May. Picking a winner in the UEFA Cup is even more difficult.

We'll leave it up to you to speculate. We can only provide as much information as possible. Because of our deadlines, we have included all the teams taking part in the Champions League third qualifying round and the UEFA Cup second qualifying round. For some of those teams, their European campaign will be over by the time you read this. But at least their presence in European competition has been recorded.

As with all previous special editions, we have raised the cover price to cover the cost of the extra pages. As ever, subscribers receive their issues at no extra cost. Our latest subscriptions offer is on page 92.

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com

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# 15 stories you need to know about

## 1 FIFA humiliated by clubs in Olympics dispute

The world governing body suffered a humiliating defeat after the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled in favour of leading European clubs who lost players to Olympic call-ups.

Barcelona, who saw Lionel Messi go to Argentina's squad, Werder Bremen (Diego to Brazil), Schalke (Rafinha to Brazil) and Marseille (Taye Taiwo to Nigeria) had all appealed to CAS about the need to release the players on the grounds that the Olympic Games fall outside FIFA's international calendar.

However, the late timing of the CAS decision, on the eve of the tournament, meant the clubs did not use the ruling to force their players to come home. More, page 12.

Release mechanism...Messi was at the centre of the Olympics row between FIFA and the clubs

Burn-out...Lehmann has extinguished his Germany career

You'll do...Madrid president Ramon Calderon directs Van der Vaart

## 2 Van Nistelrooy and Lehmann quit their national team

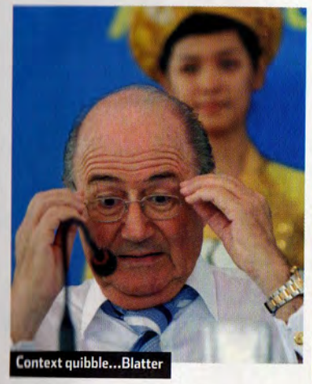
Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Holland) and Jens Lehmann (Germany) announced their international retirement. More, pages 108 & 110.

## 3 Madrid's Ronaldo bid fails

Real Madrid admitted defeat in their attempts to sign Cristiano Ronaldo from Manchester United. It left Rafael Van der Vaart as the club's main summer signing, from Hamburg. More, page 22.






Context quibble...Blatter

## 4 Blatter: "I was misquoted in slavery row"

FIFA president Sepp Blatter said his comments about slavery, when asked about Cristiano Ronaldo's possible move to Real Madrid, were taken out of context and "distorted".

"I have never said that Ronaldo is a slave," Blatter said during a visit to Vietnam. "What I said is slavery is with the young people – youngsters that European clubs are trying to get, 13, 14 and 15-year-old young boys...This is my expression, this is modern slavery.

"I have never mentioned that for Ronaldo. But the press...they have distorted it. Ronaldo is not a slave."

When asked about Ronaldo's stand-off with Manchester United, Blatter had said: "I think in football there's too much modern slavery in transferring players or buying players here and there, and putting them somewhere."

Flag of convenience...the Camorra reportedly attempted to buy Lazio

## 5 Barcelona and Tottenham lead the summer spending spree

Barca splashed out £60million on five new players, while Spurs' purchase of England midfielder David Bentley took their outlay to £43m.

Prized purchase...Bentley with Spurs coach Ramos

## 6 Athletic Bilbao break with tradition to sign sponsorship deal

Spain's oldest club will carry commercial sponsorship on their shirts for the first time this season after striking a £1.5m, three-year deal with the Petronor oil company.

## 7 Inter sign Muntari but Lampard sticks with Chelsea

The Italian champions signed Ghanaian midfielder Sulley Muntari from Portsmouth for £9m but missed out on Frank Lampard after the England midfielder agreed a new five-year deal with Chelsea worth £150,000 a week.

You read it here first...Bilbao player Urko Arroyo sports the new, sponsored shirt

## 8 United to pay record £32m for Tevez

Manchester United are close to paying a British record £32m to sign Carlos Tevez on a permanent basis. Last summer the club paid £10m to take the Argentinian on loan from West Ham for two years. The main beneficiary of a permanent deal would be Media Sports Investments, the company that owns Tevez's contract.

## 9 Mafia tried to buy Lazio

The Camorra, the Neapolitan branch of the mafia, were behind an attempt to buy Lazio in 2006, according to sources close to a police investigation in Rome. Seven people were arrested in connection with the bid, which was allegedly fronted by US-based, former Italy forward Giorgio Chinaglia, who is now being sought by the Italian authorities. More, page 10.

I've arrived...Muntari shows off his Inter shirt

How much for one of these?...Tevez with the Community Shield

## 10 Rangers crash out of Europe

Last season's UEFA Cup runners-up were the biggest casualty of the Champions League second qualifying round, losing to a late goal from Lithuania's FBK Kaunas. More, page 112.

## 11 New long-term captains for England, France and Holland

John Terry (England), Thierry Henry (France) and Giovanni Van Bronckhorst (Holland) were all appointed ahead of the World Cup qualifying campaign.

## 12 UEFA makes mint from Euro 2008

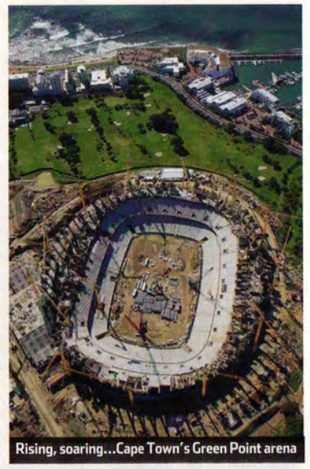
The European governing body announced a £200m net profit from its organisation of this summer's event.

## 13 Scudamore doubts about Game 39

The Premier League chief executive Richard Scudamore has admitted his plan for a 39th round of games may not come to pass any time soon. "The idea of playing a league game abroad still has to be a possibility, but whether it's in my lifetime, who knows?" he said.

Leaders...England captain Terry and manager Fabio Capello

39 steps...Scudamore


Rising, soaring...Cape Town's Green Point arena

## 14 2010 stadium costs soar

Stadium construction work for the World Cup in South Africa has run over budget by 20 per cent, from £540m to £636m.

## 15 Thuram confirms retirement

Lilian Thuram has ended his playing career at the age of 36. The defender, France's most-capped player (142), cited a heart condition, which had prevented him from moving to Paris Saint-Germain from Barcelona earlier this summer.

Casualty ward...Rangers (in blue) lost to Kaunas

Heart condition...Thuram

Profitable...UEFA chief Michel Platini with Euro 2008 winner Iker Casillas



# 8 questions we need answers to

### 1 IS DANIEL LEVY THE RIGHT PERSON TO COMPLAIN ABOUT MANCHESTER UNITED TAPPING UP DIMITAR BERBATOV?

The Spurs chairman faces accusations of hypocrisy in his response to United's attempts to sign the Bulgarian, his own club having just poached teenager John Bostock from Crystal Palace.

### 2 IS BERBATOV THE NEW CANTONA?

United manager Alex Ferguson sees the forward as the missing link in his attack.

### 3 AFTER HIS WAR OF WORDS WITH CLAUDIO RANIERI, WHO WILL JOSE MOURINHO ATTACK NEXT?

The Portuguese coach has carried on in Italy where he left off in England. More, page 26.

### 4 WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF CHELSEA ACTUALLY RECEIVING £13.8MILLION FROM ADRIAN MUTU?

The Romanian striker plans to appeal the surprise decision of FIFA's dispute resolution chamber to order him to pay Chelsea damages for breach of contract following his October 2004 sacking for failing a drugs test.

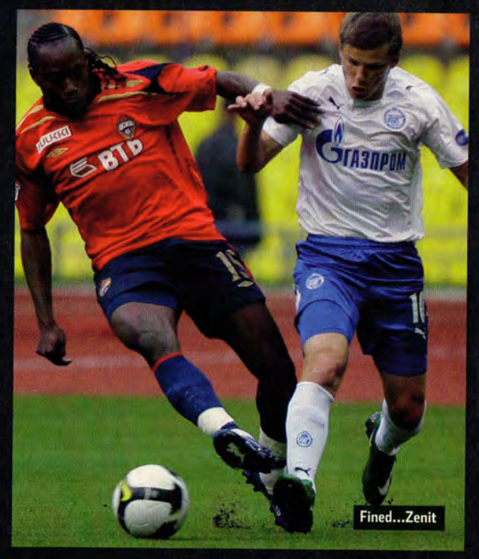
### 5 HOW WILL A £30,000 FINE STOP ZENIT ST PETERSBURG FANS FROM RACIALLY ABUSING OPPOSITION PLAYERS?

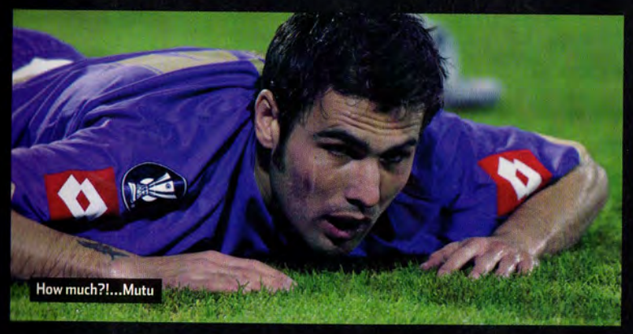
Russia's richest club were "punished" by UEFA after their supporters abused Marseille players during a UEFA Cup match in March.

### 6 WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON AT MANCHESTER CITY?

The club were forced to take out an emergency loan to pay staff as owner Thaksin Shinawatra, whose assets are frozen in Thailand, is wanted in his homeland to face corruption charges.

Do you want some?...Mourinho


Fined...Zenit


How much?!...Mutu

Have you seen this man?... Thaksin is wanted in Thailand

New and old... Eto'o

Missing link... Berbatov

### 7 IS SAMUEL ETO'O THE NEW SAMUEL ETO'O?

After failing to find a buyer for the Cameroon striker, Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola is set to stick with Eto'o for this season. More, page 22.

### 8 WHAT'S THE POINT OF THE OLYMPIC FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT?

It once again failed to capture the public imagination. More, page 32.

Pot calling kettle...Levy

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# 17 people on the move

## Who's going where

**1 HECTOR CUPER**
The Argentinian has been appointed coach of Georgia, replacing German Klaus Toppmoller, who was sacked in April. Cuper's last job was at Parma last season, where he was fired after just two months when they were relegated.

**2 MIKAEL SILVESTRE**
The 31-year-old French defender became the first Manchester United player to move to Arsenal since Brian Kidd in 1974.

**3 ROBBIE KEANE**
The Republic of Ireland forward left Tottenham for Liverpool in a £20.2million deal. It takes the total fees paid for Keane to £58m – only Nicolas Anelka, Hernan Crespo and Juan Sebastian Veron have cost more.

**4 SEBASTIAN LETO**
The highly-rated Argentinian midfielder left Liverpool for a season-long loan at Olympiakos after failing to gain a UK work permit.

Sum total...Keane

Holding sway...Cuper

**5 CARLOS VILLANUEVA**
The midfielder, Chile's player of the year in 2007, is to spend a year on loan at Blackburn from Audax Italiano with a view to a permanent deal.

**6 ARIEL ORTEGA**
The former Argentina star has joined second division Independiente Rivadavia on loan from River Plate. The 34-year-old is currently undergoing treatment for alcoholism.

**7 PETIT**
The Portugal midfielder left Benfica for promoted Bundesliga side Koln on a free transfer.

**8 & 9 DJIBRIL CISSE AND EL HADJI DIOUF**
The former Liverpool strikers have both joined Sunderland. Diouf agreed a permanent move from Bolton, while Cisse joined on a season-long loan from Marseille.

**10 DIEGO PLACENTE**
The Argentinian defender returned to Europe from San Lorenzo, signing a two-year deal with Bordeaux. Placente previously spent seven seasons with Bayer Leverkusen and Celta Vigo.

Double role...Arena

**11 OLEGUER**
The Spanish defender left Barcelona for Ajax after signing a three-year deal for an initial £2.4m. The 28-year-old will replace John Heitinga, who joined Atletico Madrid.

**12 BRUCE ARENA**
The former US national coach replaced both Ruud Gullit (coach) and Alexi Lalas (general manager) at Los Angeles Galaxy. He is the first joint coach/general manager in Major League Soccer.

**13 MATEJA KEZMAN**
The former PSV, Chelsea and Atletico Madrid striker finally completed his move from Fenerbahce to Paris Saint-Germain.

**14 DIOGO**
The Brazilian striker joined Olympiakos on a five-year deal from Portuguesa. The 21-year-old cost £8m and will reportedly be paid £1.2m a year.

Bon voyage...Kezman

**15 FABIO COLOCCINI**
The Argentinian international defender left Deportivo La Coruna for Newcastle. The Spanish club said the fee could rise to £10.3m.

**16 JULIO BAPTISTA**
The Brazil forward joined Roma from Real Madrid in a deal worth £7m.

Real to Roma...Baptista

**17 MILOVAN RAJEVAC**
The 51-year-old Serb has been named coach of Ghana. He succeeds Frenchman Claude Le Roy, who refused to extend his contract earlier this year. Rajevac was set to start work after overseeing Borac Cacak's UEFA Cup campaign.

Trophies...Sensi

**OBITUARY**
**Franco Sensi, president of Roma for the past 15 years, has died aged 82. During his reign, the club won the League in 2001, two Italian Cups (2007 and 2008) and two Italian Super Cups (2001 and 2007). Sensi had been ill for some time and had effectively ceded control of the club to his daughter Rosella, Roma's chief executive.**

## 2 REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

**1 COACH QUITS FOOTBALL FOR POLITICS**
Lithuania's national coach, Algimantas Liubinskas, has quit to concentrate on his political career. The 56-year-old, who was in his second spell in charge of Lithuania, is standing for parliament as a candidate of the populist right-wing Order and Justice Party.

**2 SONG FOR EUROPE**
Paul Potts, the winner of the *Britain's Got Talent* TV show, sung at the Bundesliga season opener between Bayern Munich and Hamburg.

## 7 RUMOURS WE'D LIKE TO BELIEVE

**1 CROATIA LEFT-BACK** Danijel Pranjic, so impressive at Euro 2008, is close to leaving Dutch club Heerenveen for the Bundesliga. Dortmund, who need to replace injured Brazilian Dede, and Hamburg would gladly take him.

**2 THE *DIARIO DE SEVILLA*** claims German moneybags outfit 1899 Hoffenheim have offered £7million for Betis' Brazilian attacker Rafael Sobis.

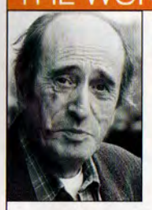
**3 CATALAN DAILY *SPORT*** has heard a whisper that Barcelona have a soft spot for young PSV Eindhoven and Holland midfielder Ibrahim Afellay.

**4 *FRANCE FOOTBALL*** continues to say that Atletico Madrid have placed Werder Bremen No 10 Diego on top of their wish-list and are ready to pay £16m for the Brazilian.

**5 MONACO'S CROAT MIDFIELDER** Jerko Leko is being chased by three English sides – Fulham, Middlesbrough and Aston Villa – and Fenerbahce.

**6 WEST HAM ARE INTERESTED** in Marseille's out-of-favour French international defender Gael Givet. Sicilian media reports have Palermo's Uruguayan striker Edinson Cavani moving to the Hammers, too.

**7 PORTUGUESE PAPER *A BOLA*** thinks there is a strong chance of Benfica buying Internazionale's Honduran front man David Suazo.



# Brian Glanville

## ...on the doomed future of football at the Olympics...Giorgio Chinaglia in trouble again...and over-valued Beckham

COULD we be seeing the end of Olympic soccer as we know it? As Colin Moynihan and Seb Coe agitate desperately to have a British team at the 2012 Olympics, the bitter stand-off between leading European clubs and FIFA suggests that the walls are closing in.

It was hardly surprising that Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have refused to provide players for the 2012 Games, afraid that South American countries and maybe others would exploit the existence of a British team as an excuse to demand that such teams rather than the four individual British sides should in future compete in the major tournaments.

I keenly remember the last time a British team did compete, and with substantial merit, in an Olympic tournament. I was in Rome in 1960 to see amateur Great Britain – the Olympic tournament was still nominally at least amateur then – hold the full Italy Under-21 side, including Gianni Rivera and Giovanni Trapattoni, to a 2-2 draw at the Flaminio stadium. The Italians with devious casuistry had decided that if, under their own rules, no player could officially turn pro until he was 21, then anyone under 21 must be an amateur!

In fact, professionalism had crept in as long ago as the 1920s. Though Moynihan, small but imperfectly informed, as I once categorised him in his unimpressive days as minister of sport, and Coe should be told that an all-English United Kingdom team actually won the Olympic tournament in 1908 and 1912. The side wholly comprised crack amateurs playing for first division teams, including Vivian Woodward, an outstanding attacker with Chelsea and Spurs.

But by 1928, when a superb Uruguayan side won the Olympic title for the second consecutive time, it was plain that steps had to be taken. So came the inception of the World Cup in 1930, which Uruguay, of course, proceeded to win on their own soil.

Clean hands... Chinaglia denies any wrongdoing

The Olympic competition continued, but how amateur were the amateurs? Such as the superb Hungarian team that won the 1952 tournament in Helsinki, Puskas, Kocsis and all. Just over a year later they became the first foreign team to beat England on English soil, 6-3.

The Olympics desperately want to keep soccer because it brings in more money than any other sport.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has insisted that clubs are bound to release for the Olympics all players of 23 and under. The daft compromise whereby each team can field up to three overage players also enables a club to refuse such players their release. Blatter insists, but Bayern Munich's Karl-Heinz Rummenigge retorts that there is nothing legally to force a club to give up their players for the Olympics.

Werder Bremen and Barcelona took their case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. This fact alone surely shows that Olympic soccer as we know it is doomed. Like it or not, the constant expansion of major competitive football means that clubs can need their players as early as July for the preliminaries of the European competitions. And for better or worse, the clubs are bound to win in the end.

EVER THE stormy petrel, Giorgio Chinaglia is once again in deep controversy. This time, he has been subject to an arrest warrant, together with 10 members of the Camorra, the Neapolitan mafia, accused of bringing pressure on the president of Lazio, Claudio Lotito, to sell them the club.

Chinaglia professes his complete innocence, claiming "this is a nightmare which comes two years after the facts". Yes, he would like to resume the presidency of Lazio, which he lost some years ago, but he'd wish to acquire it "only legally".

However, a wiretap on his phone revealed a conversation with Giuseppe Diana, head of the notorious Casalesi branch of the Camorra.

It's alleged that the Camorra wanted Chinaglia as a front man, hoping to use Lazio for money laundering. Chinaglia denies all, but the tapes tell their story.

Meanwhile, the hapless Lotito has been the object of menacing phone calls, the presumed authors of which are now behind bars. Chinaglia, by contrast, seems safe enough in the States. It does seem somewhat unlikely that he could be extradited.

Here, I must declare an interest. I have known and liked Chinaglia for some 35 years, and followed the ups and downs of his career with interest and sometimes astonishment. He has come an awfully long way from his teenage days as a Swansea Town reserve when, short of money because he was fined so often for indiscipline, breakfast used to consist of bottles of milk filched from doorsteps in the early morning.

THE EXTRAORDINARY ability of David Beckham to be taken at his own excessive valuation, on both sides of the Atlantic, was all too embarrassingly shown when, after seven games without a victory, the benighted Los Angeles Galaxy sacked their unlikely top executive Alexi Lalas, once a rumbustious, guitar-playing centre-back, and parted company with the sainted Ruud Gullit as coach. Decisive if not ruthless action by the club's multi-millionaire owners; but what possessed them to offer Beckham such a colossal salary in the first place?

Fabio Capello, of course, another sufferer from Beckhamitis, had him in the England squad for the friendly against the Czech Republic. Maybe sooner or later there will be a new TV documentary: Beckham's Bluff. ●

> "Clubs can need their players as early as July for the European competition preliminaries. And for better or worse, the clubs are bound to win"

Those were the days...the all-England UK team that struck gold at the 1912 Olympics

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# THREE GOALS

## WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN...

Dynamic...Clark shakes Salt Lake

**1 Ricardo Clark for Houston Dynamo v Real Salt Lake**

***A great strike in a 4-3 win in MLS.***

Hot chip...Semih strikes

**2 Semih Senturk for Fenerbahce v MTK Budapest**

***A brilliant chip in the Champions League second qualifying round tie.***

**3 Christian Pander for Schalke v Atletico Madrid**

Champion...Pander on target

***A trademark free-kick that brought the Gelsenkirchen side a 1-0 victory in the first leg of the Champions League third qualifying round tie.***

To see clips of these goals, visit www.worldsoccer.com

# Keir Radnedge

## ...on a humiliating defeat for FIFA in the build-up to Beijing...Man City's Thaksin nightmare...Giovinco the gem...and the doubts about Brazil 2014

FIFA HAS ONLY itself to blame for the chaos that undermined the credibility of the Olympic football tournament in Beijing.

First, it let the Games "escape" the unified international calendar, then it allowed itself to be subject to a humiliating defeat in the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

When FIFA grudgingly accepted the creation of CAS a decade ago, it was in the firm belief that the tribunal would defend the primacy of the international federations that, led by the International Olympic Committee, had created it.

That misunderstanding has been exposed, to the embarrassment of FIFA president Sepp Blatter and football in general. In respect of the Olympics, the world body was found guilty of arrogance in the face of not only its own member clubs but also world sport in general.

Most other sports managed to send their finest athletes to the 29th Olympiad, but football has long since been allowed to fall short of honouring the Olympic ideal.

The Olympic football tournament was the original world championship, in the days before professionalism had taken root. But, after the launch of the World Cup in 1930, the Olympics lost their significance for football.

That loss of status was shown by FIFA's decision not to include the Olympics when it drew up the co-ordinated international calendar.

The run-up to Beijing should have been all about the quality on view, from stars such as Leo Messi of Argentina and Ronaldinho of Brazil. Instead, it was all about FIFA defending a non-existent rule against the power of the clubs.

FIFA had insisted that clubs were obliged to release players aged 23 and under for the Games but that this order did not apply to the overage players (each Olympic squad was allowed three of the latter). Blatter's insistence was based on the fact that the FIFA international calendar includes the Under-21 tournaments through which nations qualify for the Games.

Face-saving...Messi and Argentina came to the rescue of the footballing quality on show at the Olympics

> "In respect of the Olympics, FIFA was found guilty of arrogance in the face of not only its member clubs but also world sport in general"

Summing up... Thaksin did not spend the money he claimed he had

The trouble is, of course, that the Olympics always falls at the time when the European club seasons are just beginning. The financial value of Champions League progress was the key reason underpinning Barcelona's tenacity in their fight to prevent Messi's escape to Beijing.

Werder Bremen also looked to CAS with regard to Brazil playmaker Diego, Schalke regarding compatriot right-back Rafinha and Marseille regarding Nigerian defender Taye Taiwo.

To FIFA's fury, CAS, meeting in Beijing on the eve of the Games, came down in favour of the clubs.

It said: "The Olympic football tournament is not included in the co-ordinated match calendar and there is no specific decision of the FIFA executive committee establishing the obligation for the clubs to release players under 23 for this tournament.

"The requirements to justify a legal obligation of clubs to release their players on the basis of customary law are not met. Accordingly, the panel concluded that Schalke, Werder Bremen and Barcelona had no legal obligation to release the players Rafinha, Diego and Messi, respectively, for the Olympic tournament."

But CAS did appeal to the clubs to demonstrate good will and common sense, to allow the tournament to go ahead without a sudden star drain.

Schalke, Werder and Barca did precisely that, though they may have had more pragmatic reasons. With the Games about to start and their rebels having already missed a large chunk of pre-season, the two German clubs thought it pointless to recall them.

Schalke general manager Andreas Muller said that had the legal position been made clear earlier, the clubs would not have let the players go – though they could not physically have stopped them.

"We found ourselves in an impossible situation," Muller said. "FIFA and the CBF [Brazilian federation] were aware of this question months ago. I believe the matter was deliberately delayed until just before the Olympics to put the clubs in a difficult position.

"We recognise the dilemma faced by Rafinha. He was put under enormous moral pressure to take part by the Brazilian federation and Dunga, the Olympic and senior national team coach. We decided that it was best for him to remain at the Games. If we'd ordered him back, all the frustration and huge disappointment he would have felt, coupled with the exertions of travelling, would not, in our opinion, have enabled him to play to the best of his ability."

Barcelona also leveraged the situation to their advantage. They drove a hard bargain through which the Argentinian federation underwrote a vastly enhanced injury insurance policy for Messi and guaranteed there would be next to no call-ups for friendly internationals.

"It was not our intention or will to fight FIFA or the IOC, it was for us merely a matter of clarifying the rules and regulations," said Barca president Joan Laporta. "Of course, we are very proud to have our players at the Olympics but we also have our interests that we must defend. Our fans would expect it of us."

Blatter said: "I'm very disappointed. This is absolutely nonsense. I cannot understand how CAS, which is an emanation of the Olympic movement, made such a ruling – particularly just at the time when the Olympic Games have started – because it has put us in a very difficult situation. If you take this ruling at face value then we might have no Olympic tournament."

The wrangling did nothing for the haphazard quality of the tournament. However, it was just about saved by the commitment of the federations and players of Argentina and Brazil – the superb Messi in particular.

After Argentina's extra-time win over the Dutch in the quarter-finals, Holland coach Foppe De Haan said: "Messi is unbelievably good. Even though I was on the opposing side I found myself getting excited, wondering what he would do next."

But Messi's brilliance could not hide the reality that the entire Olympic tournament needs a major overhaul.

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WAS ANYONE surprised when the Thaksin Shinawatra dream turned into a nightmare for Manchester City? I thought not. It's a pity for the club, a pity for the fans. But the fact was that City were in such desperate financial straits that they would have dragged in any passing millionaire off the street.

Now it seems that most of Sven Goran Eriksson's hastily assembled team last season were signed on instalment deals. Thaksin, a man on the run in the UK after slipping bail back in Thailand, did not even spend the money that he claimed he had.

---

ITALY'S BRIGHT opening to the Olympics – they lost their heads and their quarter-final 3-2 against Belgium – was a showcase for many of the younger players who tend to be overshadowed by Serie A's contingent of foreign superstars. Most notable among them was Juventus' attacking midfielder Sebastian Giovinco, who scored Italy's first goal at the tournament. However, will he and his team-mates ever have the chance to make the grade?

Opening goal...Giovinco took his chance to impress for Italy in China

Theirs to keep?... Brazil's retention of the World Cup hosting rights is far from certain

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THE MEDIA will express doubts about South Africa's ability to host the 2010 World Cup right up until the opening match kicks off. Not that there is any question of FIFA pulling out. In fact, Brazil's chances of holding on to the 2014 finals are much less certain. The original FIFA study report was badly flawed and nothing concrete has been achieved since the initial business and political flurry to prove that Brazil was the only South American option.

As we said at the time, the complacency induced by that monopoly position could prove Brazil's undoing. ●

# Paul Gardner

## ...on how Spain showed that skill still matters

IT IS QUITE impossible to exaggerate the importance of Spain's win at Euro 2008. Yes, it was nice to see them triumph after so many near misses and rebuffs resulting from bum refereeing. But that's not what I'm talking about. The significance of the win goes far beyond that, right to the heart of the sport.

Bear with me for a second, but I need to invoke a few statistics, a very few, this will be quite painless. In the Final, the Germans employed a four-man midfield of Michael Ballack, Torsten Frings, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Thomas Hitzlsperger. A physically formidable quartet with an average weight of 178.5lb and average height of just over 6ft. Spain used five midfielders: Cesc Fabregas, Xavi, Andres Iniesta, David Silva and Marcos Senna. Average weight: 153.2lb. Average height: 5ft 8in.

Consider that: the German midfielders outweighed the Spanish by more than 25lb per man and had a 4in height advantage. And it is in the huge disparity of those statistics that the significance of the Spanish win lies. Because they show that the musclemen were unable to impose themselves on the little guys. What we saw was that the quick-moving, quick-thinking and, above all, superior skills of the Spaniards were more than a match for the German strength and organisation.

Despite the 1-0 score, this was not a close game. But the Germans are good at that – for years they have given us banal soccer, but they always manage to keep the score close, and then they snatch a late winner. They did something like that at the last World Cup when they held on to beat, on penalties, a superior Argentinian team.

And they could quite easily have done the same thing here. Leading Germany 1-0 is almost a definition of agonising suspense, a time for frantic nail-chewing. Looking back, one can now comfortably say that the Germans didn't pose much of a threat to Spain, and a 3-0 scoreline would have done greater justice to the Spanish dominance.

But the point had been emphatically made on the field: the big winner on the day was skilful soccer. Spain gave us what we don't see enough of – the complete game of football. In a game where the players seem to get bigger, stronger and faster every year, it was a merciful relief to see a halt called to the march of size, strength and speed.

There were echoes of the 1970 World Cup Final, in which the ugly, defensive *catenaccio* of the Italians looked as though it was going to sweep all before it, only for it to be torn to shreds by the wonderful Brazilians. The sport was saved from the boredom of *catenaccio* and passed to the attacking excitement of total football. But it was total football that made stamina and tactics so important, and laid the groundwork for the modern physical game, in which the element of skill is too often regarded as a luxury that isn't really needed so long as players can run tirelessly and obey their coach's tactical instructions.

In short, the sport is always under threat from the quick-fix guys, the ones who want to find a way of winning that can circumvent the tricky, time-consuming business of producing and relying on skilled players.

I would guess there are hundreds of quick-fix schemes and systems on the market in book and tape and DVD form, all of them offering a winning soccer future. I can also feel sure that not one of them is based on the idea that exceptional players is the answer.

### Constant apprehension

I'll admit to constant apprehension on this topic, a feeling that the sport does not do enough to ensure that skilful players are protected from thuggery and doesn't frame its rules to ensure the skill versus strength hostility is fought out on equal terms. Twice now I've seen football sliding towards a defensive, physical and so less interesting game, only for it to be rescued by the Brazilians and now the Spanish.

Of course, it could be that I'm merely being paranoid. I was reading recently some comments from Tostao, centre-forward in that superb 1970 Brazil team. He said: "These days you can't get by on talent alone, you need tactical discipline, physical preparation...but fortunately quality is still the most important thing." And when I read that my paranoia sets in again. Because words such as "quality" and "talent" do not denote immutable values. Their meaning changes over time. Quality in the past may well have been used to describe dribbling skills. I'm not sure that would be the case today, when dribbling seems more like a dirty word.

To define: what I'm looking for is a game based on refined skills. The rest – the fitness and tactics – must take second place. That's what we saw from Spain and it was a joy to watch. Let us hope its message of skilful football will be heard. ●

> "Football is always under threat from the quick-fix guys, who want to circumvent the tricky business of producing skilled players"

Little and large...but Silva and Spain got the better of Ballack's Germany



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# HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

## Khalid Boulahrouz

### New start for tragedy-hit defender

**GERMANY**

BY SIGNING for Bundesliga side Stuttgart, Khalid Boulahrouz hopes that he can pick up the pieces of his professional career and, more importantly, his personal life.

The last eight months have been grim for the Dutch international defender of Moroccan descent. Boulahrouz was sent on loan by Chelsea to Sevilla, got injured and was initially omitted from Holland's Euro 2008 squad. However, his professional setbacks paled in comparison with the tragedy he suffered this summer. During Euro 2008, for which he had received a late call-up, he was urgently called to a hospital in Lausanne to be with his wife Sabia. Doctors were trying, in vain, to save the life of his premature daughter, Anissa.

The player, nicknamed The Cannibal, is used to setbacks. Aged 16 he lost his father and had to take responsibility for his mother and eight younger brothers and sisters. It affected his football career– an intractable Boulahrouz got stuck in the youth and reserve teams at AZ, Ajax and Haarlem.

The turning point came when Martin Jol picked him up at unfashionable RKC Waalwijk. He made his Holland debut in a friendly against Liechtenstein in September 2004, shortly after a transfer to Hamburg, where, with Daniel Van Buyten, he formed the best central defensive partnership in the Bundesliga and earned a transfer to Chelsea in 2006.

But after a promising start at Stamford Bridge Boulahrouz fell out of favour with Jose Mourinho. His fate was sealed when he was sent off after unnecessarily bringing down Arsenal's Julio Baptista. The converted spot-kick effectively ended Chelsea's title chances, and Boulahrouz was loaned to Sevilla for the 2007-08 season. But he had barely set foot in Spain when team-mate Antonio Puerta collapsed during a match and died.

A severe groin injury in early October meant Boulahrouz missed the rest of the season, so it was a surprise when he got a call for Holland's preliminary squad for Euro 2008. He missed the cut when it was reduced to 23 for the finals, but when winger Ryan Babel pulled out with an ankle injury, Boulahrouz was recalled. Astonishingly for a player with so little match practice, he was in the starting line-up for all three group matches, when Holland produced some dazzling displays. Various theories have been put forward to explain why Holland were unable to reproduce their first round form in the quarter-final, when they lost to Russia.

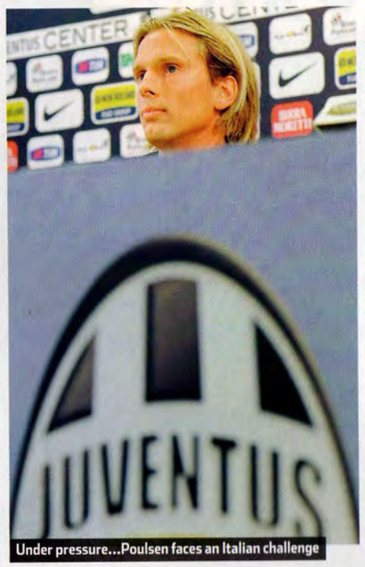
Some believe resting key players against Romania in the final group game killed the squad's rhythm. But others have suggested that Boulahrouz's personal drama disturbed the team's concentration.

"I'm sure Boulahrouz and the others had the best intentions," said Hans Van Breukelen, goalkeeper of the 1988 European Championship-winning team. "But in 10 years' time some of the players will think that it would have been better if Boulahrouz had left the team to help his family to deal with this enormous loss."

Instead, Boulahrouz bravely played against Russia. But the defender, like his colleagues, never showed the form of the group stage and he was substituted in the 54th minute after picking up an injury.

His transfer to Stuttgart offers a new start. In May 2007, Stuttgart were celebrating the Bundesliga title, while Boulahrouz was with one of Europe's biggest clubs. Happier times. Now both can use a little sunshine in their lives again.

*Klaas-Jan Droppert*



Under pressure...Poulsen faces an Italian challenge

## Christian Poulsen

### Bold move for the Danish defensive midfielder

**ITALY**

CHRISTIAN POULSEN'S decision to decamp to Serie A is either the mark of a man who relishes a monumental challenge or one who is totally insensitive. "I know that my reputation as a trouble-maker precedes me," said the Danish defensive midfielder shortly after he concluded the £8million switch to Juventus from Sevilla.

He is not kidding. *Azzurri* star Francesco Totti was banned at Euro 2004 for spitting at the Scandinavian hard man –Totti claimed that he was reacting to relentless provocation.

The acrimony became even more intense when the Dane, this time playing for Schalke, violently kicked Milan's Kaka from pillar to post in a Champions League game in 2005.

That night Milan pitbull Gennaro Gattuso enjoyed celebrating his team's win in Poulsen's face. But Gattuso showed grudging respect on hearing that he and his old adversary would be facing one another again in Serie A. "I have to admit he has balls to move to Serie A, where he does not have a lot of friends," Gattuso said. "I'm intrigued to see how he will cope with all this pressure."

A new chapter...Boulahrouz will be hoping to put his grim year behind him with his move to Stuttgart

Too much too soon?...Altidore has joined Villarreal after just 48 games in MLS

# Jozy Altidore
## Villarreal gamble on US teen

**SPAIN**

VILLARREAL, Spanish league runners-up last season, have taken a gamble in paying £5.2million for New York Red Bulls' teenage striker Josmer "Jozy" Altidore, a record fee for a US player.

There's no doubt that the 18-year-old of Haitian descent is a fine prospect. He underlined his potential by scoring five goals at the Under-20 World Cup last year and became the youngest ever marksman in an MLS play-off game. However, he has been a professional for only two years and there have to be doubts about whether just 48 games for the Red Bulls is sufficient grounding for a championship as tough as La Liga.

In truth, Altidore may find regular playing time difficult to achieve – he stands only fifth in the front-line pecking order behind Turkey's Nihat Kahveci, Italian Giuseppe Rossi, Mexican international Guillermo Franco and another new signing, Joseba Llorente.

Villarreal had looked set to send Altidore on loan to a smaller Spanish club, but the plans were hampered by his presence at the Olympics.

# Ivan Klasnic
## Turning his back on Bremen

**FRANCE**

WITH HIS profile suitably raised by two goals for Croatia at Euro 2008, out-of-contract Werder Bremen striker Ivan Klasnic had been tipped to move to Spain, England or another leading Bundesliga side. So it was a major shock when he was unveiled at promoted Ligue 1 side Nantes, a team that won the French title in 2001 but have fallen on hard times since.

Sources close to Klasnic claim that the move was motivated by the desire to be the focal point of an attack after years as a second string in Bremen to such figures as Ailton and Miroslav Klose. More cynical pundits say the clincher was a £1.6million-a-year salary package, which makes him the highest-paid player at Nantes by a country mile.

Klasnic is known for his great resilience and determination on the field, and he showed those same qualities in his recent fight with renal failure, a condition that necessitated two kidney transplant operations and kept him out of the game for almost the whole of 2007. In training and on matchdays he now wears a glassfibre corset to protect the lower back area.

Focal point...Klasnic

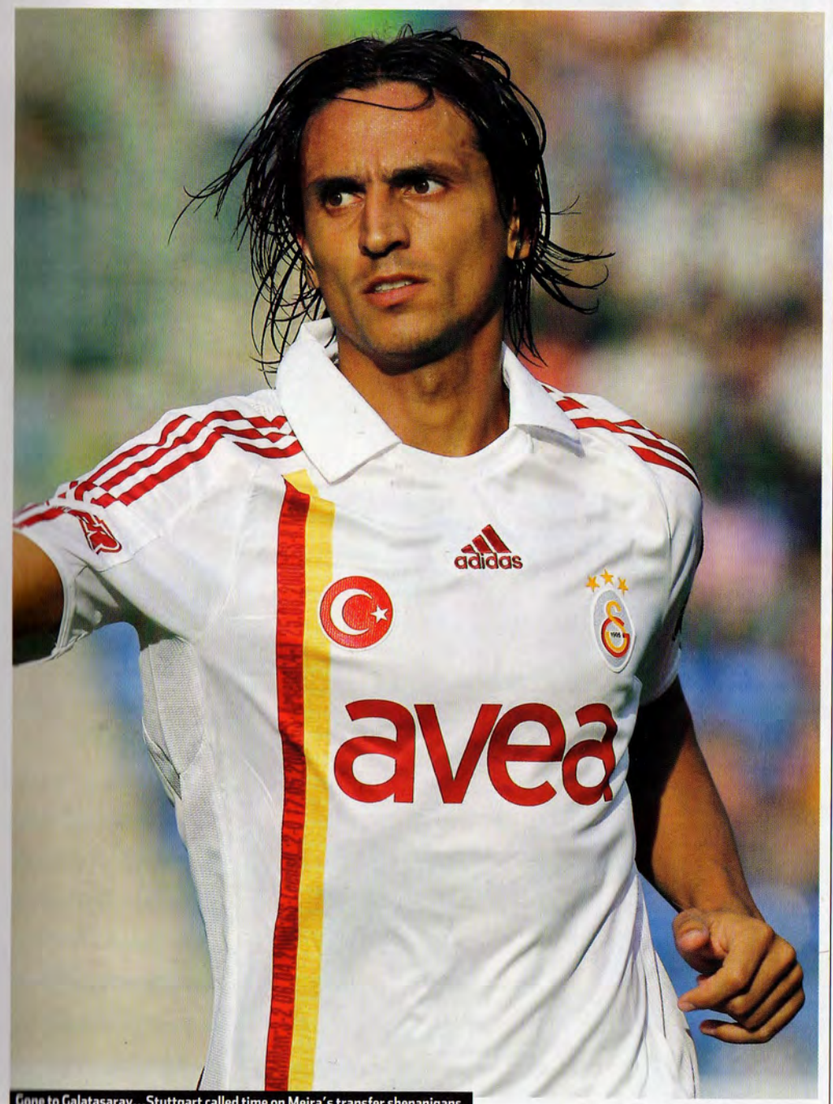
# Fernando Meira
## Finally out of Stuttgart

**TURKEY**

FOR MANY well acquainted with the German game it was quite a shock to discover that talented Portuguese centre-back Fernando Meira had managed to prise himself away from Stuttgart, where he had excelled since 2001.

In each of the past three years, Meira had spent the close season swearing he wanted out of the Swabian club, only to be persuaded at the eleventh hour to stay put. This time, though, Stuttgart's management were happy to let their captain go. Tired of his annual transfer shenanigans and needing fresh funds, they snatched at Galatasaray's bid of £4.2million for the ex-Benfica player.

The other surprising element in Meira's departure was the type of club competing with Galatasaray for his signature – Dynamo Moscow, Panathinaikos and Monaco. Only a year ago, after playing a significant part in Stuttgart's Bundesliga title triumph, he was attracting an altogether higher class of would-be buyer, with Liverpool and Juventus apparently sweet on his uncompromising marking and style on the ball. That nothing came of that will probably be an eternal source of regret for Meira.



Gone to Galatasaray...Stuttgart called time on Meira's transfer shenanigans

Lazio loan man...Zarate

# Mauro Zarate
## Qatar to Rome via Brum

**ITALY**

IN THE SECOND half of last season young Argentinian forward Mauro Zarate was loaned to Birmingham by Qatar club Al Sadd, but even his attacking brilliance could not save the Blues from relegation.

For a while, though, it seemed that the 22-year-old would remain in the English top flight. Arsenal and Liverpool managers Arsene Wenger and Rafa Benitez were rumoured to be taken with his effortless ability to skip past opponents and his versatility – he can play on either flank, at the point of attack or in the hole. Portsmouth boss Harry Redknapp actually began negotiations with Al Sadd, who bought Zarate for £11million from Velez Sarsfield in 2007. However, it was Lazio who got him in the end. Frustrated in their attempts to recruit outstanding Boca Juniors forward Rodrigo Palacio, the Rome club turned to Zarate and sealed the deal to take him on a season-long loan.

Last year, Zarate was leading scorer in the Argentinian opening championship and a key figure in his country's triumph at the Under-20 World Cup. He comes from football stock – three of his brothers, Sergio, Rolando and Ariel, are or were professionals. ●

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

# GOALS PER GAME

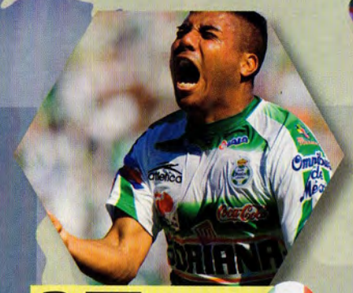
A country-by-country breakdown

**3.20**

**WALES**
The average number of goals in the top division in 2007-08 (982 goals in 306 matches).

**2.68**

**SPAIN**
The average number of goals in La Liga in 2007-08 (1,021 goals in 380 matches).



**2.77**

**MEXICO**
The average number of goals in last season's opening and closing championships (950 goals in 342 matches).

**2.75**

**BRAZIL**
The average number of goals in the 2007 national championship (1,047 goals in 380 matches).

**2.81**

**GERMANY**
The average number of goals in the Bundesliga in 2007-08 (860 goals in 306 matches).

**2.54**

**ARGENTINA**
The average number of goals in last season's opening and closing championships (967 goals in 380 matches).

**3.12**

**HOLLAND**
The average number of goals in the Eredivisie in 2007-08 (956 goals in 306 matches).

**2.63**

**ENGLAND**
The average number of goals in the Premier League in 2007-08 (1,002 goals in 380 matches).

**2.28**

**FRANCE**
The average number of goals in Ligue 1 in 2007-08 (868 goals in 380 matches).

**2.31**

**BULGARIA**
The average number of goals in the 2007-08 championship (555 goals in 240 matches).

**2.55**

**ITALY**
The average number of goals in Serie A in 2007-08 (970 goals in 380 matches).

**2.83**

**JAPAN**
The average number of goals in the J.League in 2007 (867 goals in 306 matches).

**2.31**

**GHANA**
The average number of goals in the 2007-08 Premier League (556 goals in 240 matches).

**3.22**

**QATAR**
The average number of goals in the 2007-08 championship (435 goals in 135 matches).

**2.34**

**RUSSIA**
The average number of goals in the League in 2007 (562 goals in 240 matches).

# DISPATCHES

The big stories from our worldwide network of correspondents



# Undone deals

Back? I never went away...Eto'o celebrates a goal against Wisla Krakow, 24 hours after officially returning to the Barcelona fold

## The Spanish summer was dominated by two transfers that never happened

SID LOWE
in Madrid

RONALDINHO swapped Camp Nou for San Siro, roared on by 30,000 delirious Milan fans as he performed tricks, flicks and that trademark thumb and little finger waggle, dripping with bling.

All mumbled words and simmering determination, Deco's presentation at Stamford Bridge was not such a bombastic event but the impact of his debut made up for it as he smashed in Chelsea's fourth goal on the opening day of the Premier League season after dominating the game with his characteristic sparrow-stepped style.

Daniel Alves, not so much a right-back as an entire team wrapped up in one hyperactive man, turned up at Camp Nou for a whopping £23million (plus a conditional £4.75m), three long years after he first tried to work an exit from the clutches of Sevilla president Jose Maria del Nido, the toughest negotiator in Spain.

And Dutch midfielder Rafael Van der Vaart brought a little glamour back to Real Madrid when he was presented alongside his wife, model and television presenter Sylvie Mies – and the person the cameras were really interested in that roasting August day at the Bernabeu.

But Spain's summer ended up being as much about two transfers that weren't, about the domino effect that never happened. They had dominated the media for five weeks but in barely five days it was finally confirmed that both Samuel Eto'o and Cristiano Ronaldo were going nowhere. Real Madrid were forced to accept that they could not get their man; Barcelona were forced to accept that they could not get rid of theirs. Consequently, players such as Valencia duo David Villa and David Silva were forced to accept that they would not get the move they wanted.

At both Madrid and Barca, authority was undermined, the embarrassment palpable. Yet while Madrid were left with nothing, the feeling grew that Barcelona might just have stumbled across the perfect consolation prize: they had "signed" one of the best strikers in the world.

Early in the summer, new Barca coach Pep Guardiola announced that Ronaldinho, Deco and Eto'o were not in his plans. It would be better, he said, for them to find new clubs. In fact, Barcelona would help look for them. Five weeks later, with Deco and Ronaldinho having departed, Guardiola announced that Eto'o would definitely be staying. "Samuel, yes" ran one headline; another read: "Barcelona make the 'signing' of the summer."

Hardly surprising, you might think. After all, the Cameroonian had been Barcelona's top scorer during pre-season, way ahead of Thierry Henry despite only ever coming on as a sub. Just 24 hours before Barcelona's first competitive game of the season – the first leg of their Champions League qualifier against Wisla Krakow – Eto'o was officially back in the fold, and he scored twice in the 4-0 defeat of the Polish champions. He then headed in a 95th-minute winner against Boca Juniors in the Gamper Trophy, the club's traditional curtain-raiser.

Only it wasn't about the goals. Eto'o has always scored by the bucket load – 24 and 26 in his first two league seasons, followed by 27 more in just 37 games for the next two injury-hit years. Last season he scored 16 in only 17 starts. Barcelona were never worried about Eto'o's goals; they were far more worried about his knees – the site of the injuries he suffered over the past two seasons – and his mouth. It was the disruptive influence of the Cameroonian in his own dressing room not in the opposition's defence that concerned them. The striker had no place in Guardiola's revolution, one based on commitment and team spirit.

### Wage demands

But Barcelona had a problem: they could not sell Eto'o. That was the real reason he stayed, not the goals he scored. It is not as if Barcelona had not tried to sell him. He had even been in Uzbekistan looking for a move. But his wage demands – £4.75m a year, after tax – were too high, and so too was the fee Barcelona wanted: at least £24m. Suspicion grew about why Barcelona wanted shot of him – there were whispers about his age (is he really only 27?), his fitness and his temperament. At the same time, Barcelona could not reach a deal for Emmanuel Adebayor, Didier Drogba, Karim Benzema or even David Trezeguet; and as for Henry, he still wasn't scoring, despite Guardiola returning him to the central role he pined for last season.

And so it was that Barcelona were forced to keep Eto'o. But if Guardiola's authority seemed undermined, if Eto'o's commitment to a club that had openly tried to offload him might have appeared questionable, and fears of a blow-up continued, there was optimism. Without his enemy Ronaldinho; with a new, stricter regime made more in his competitive image; and given a fresh start, Eto'o's attitude appeared (however temporarily) to have changed. His scoring record, meanwhile, had not. Barcelona had got it all wrong but somehow seemed to have ended up getting it all right.

For Madrid, the outcome of the summer could hardly have been more different. President Ramon Calderon was on a plane to Colombia when the news he never wanted to hear broke: Cristiano Ronaldo had announced that he was going to stay at Manchester United. Calderon had no idea that the announcement was coming, a fact that spoke volumes about his failure to master the situation. Asked about Ronaldo's decision as he departed the plane, all he could muster was a brief: "I don't want to talk about Ronaldo; he is a United player."

That consideration had rarely worried Calderon before but he had not seen Ronaldo as a United player before: he had, rather, been a Madrid player in waiting. Suddenly, the president's

> "Eto'o's attitude appeared to have changed. His scoring record had not. Barca had got it all wrong but somehow seemed to have ended up getting it all right"

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Team in trouble...Madrid coach Schuster (left) feels he needs more players; president Calderon has received flak for once again failing to buy a promised star

> Cristiano Ronaldo was not prepared to push as hard as Madrid needed: he never openly defied Alex Ferguson. Real president Calderon never controlled the situation

bravado looked empty, his cunning plan not so cunning, and he was a saddened, defeated man. Calderon was at least telling the truth when he said that he did not want to talk about it. There was nothing to say; he could not put a brave face on events. Even Ronaldo's admission that he wanted to go to Madrid was no consolation.

Calderon's plan had backfired. Back in June, he had told his board that Madrid's work was done. All they needed to do was wait for Ronaldo to speak up and force an exit. It was a familiar strategy, followed successfully by former president Florentino Perez: first, speak to the player; next, use the media to leak your interest in the player and create the conditions necessary for a sale; then, get the player publicly to declare his desire to leave his club; and finally, negotiate with the club, by now backed into a corner, left with little option to sell.

When Calderon spoke to the Bernabeu board, he informed them that Madrid had spoken to Ronaldo's agent, Jorge Mendes, about signing his client. An agreement was close, now all they could do was wait – and brief the Madrid press, who fostered a climate they considered conducive to his signing. Sports daily *AS* happily claimed it had "created" a "state of excitement" that was "useful to the player and to Madrid".

It seemed to have paid off when Ronaldo admitted during Euro 2008 that he wanted to go to Madrid. But Calderon forgot that there was a third party to consider: Manchester United. Breaking their resolve was a different matter.

Yes, David Beckham and Ruud Van Nistelrooy had come to Madrid but, as Sir Alex Ferguson insisted, United had sold them because they wanted to. Ronaldo was a different matter – all the more so as Madrid's courtship of the Portuguese winger had done so much to infuriate United. Ferguson even talked about Madrid's supposed links to General Franco, while his Portuguese assistant, Carlos Queiroz, bizarrely rekindled his homeland's old border disputes with Spain.

### Game of wills

It became a game of wills, an exercise in pride, a fight against losing face. With the involvement of the Spanish sports press, Madrid seemed to have overplayed their hand. Negotiating with a player whose only public condition was to insist that Madrid match the dizzying figures being banded about, both in salary and fee, was never going to be easy; negotiating with a furious Ferguson, emboldened by the perceived slight, was always going to prove difficult. He was neither the prone, wounded prey Madrid would have liked nor the willing seller they had counted on in the past.

In fact, negotiating with Ferguson was not difficult, it was impossible. He answered the threat of being lumbered with an unhappy player by insisting that if necessary he would leave Ronaldo in the stands. United's attitude, he revealed, was one of "screw you!". Without Madrid's "lack of morals", as United put it, maybe it would not have been. Nor, crucially, was Ronaldo prepared to push as hard as Madrid needed: he never openly defied Ferguson. For all Calderon's optimism, he never controlled the situation.

Sensing which way the wind was blowing and stung by the ferocity of United's attacks, Calderon took a step back at one stage – perhaps aware that he had made life harder for himself. He even went so far as to insist that "not signing Ronaldo would not be a failure". But that is exactly what it was.





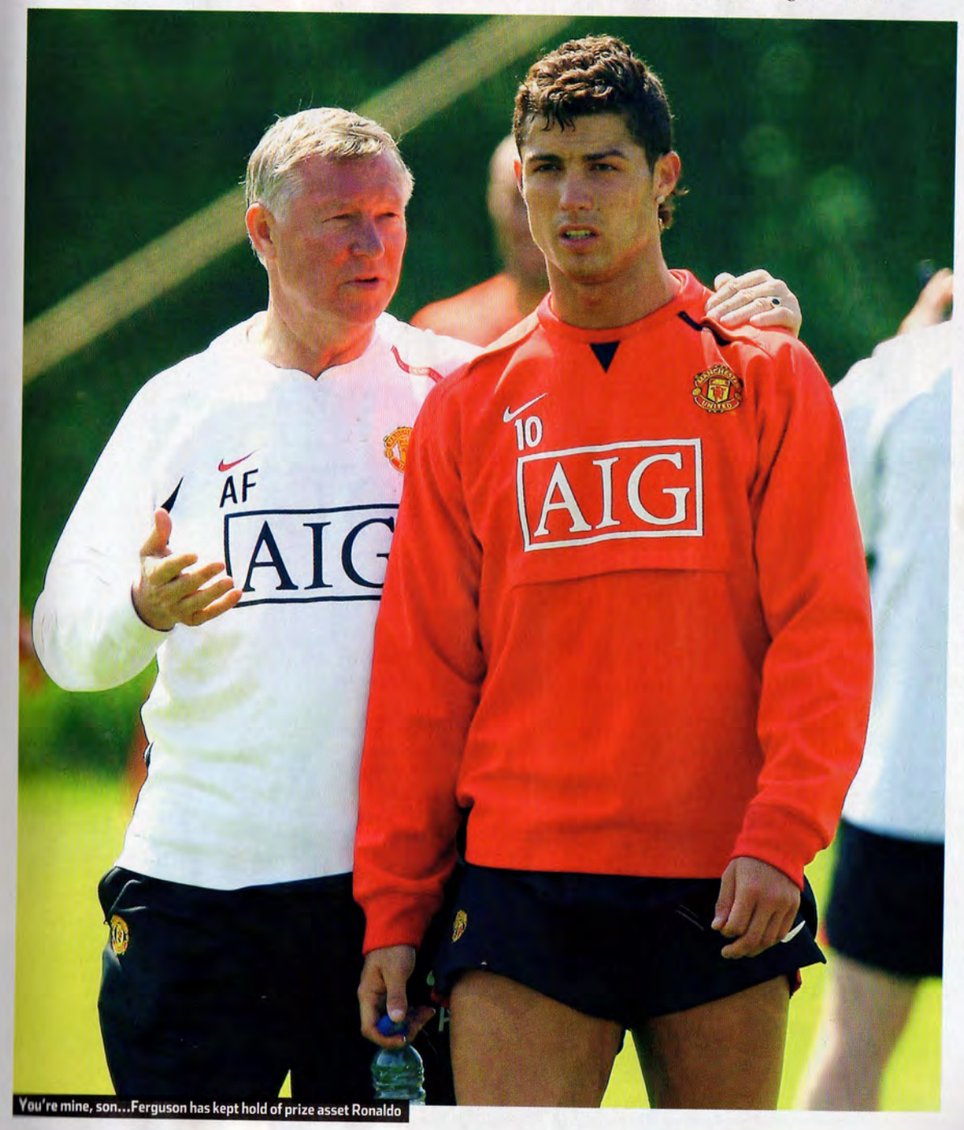
Especially for Calderon himself. Losing out on Ronaldo was the bitterest of blows for a president who had already failed to land the promised Kaka and Cesc Fabregas and who secured Arjen Robben a year late. The consequences could be severe.

### Calderon berated

Already distrusted and lacking in popular legitimacy as president, Calderon was the centre of criticism in the wake of Ronaldo's announcement that he was staying. Fan forums, newspaper message boards and the media berated him for failing to bring in a star name, breaking another promise, and once again demonstrating that he lacks the aptitude to bring in the world's best players. At the presentation of Van der Vaart, Calderon was whistled and booed and fans chanted "Ronaldo! Ronaldo!".

No wonder the president did not want to speak upon arrival in Colombia; he could say little in his defence. The only ploy left to him was to keep quiet. Instead, it was left to coach Bernd Schuster to pass comment, but even that did not help, with the German taking the opportunity to take yet another shot at the club's transfer policy. "We've already talked about the fact that if we focused too much on Cristiano Ronaldo and hoped for a lot then we could have a problem if he didn't come," Schuster said. "We need new faces but I am always the last to know round here."

With no Plan B in place as Calderon insists Madrid's summer spending is over and with Wesley Sneijder injured, Madrid certainly have a problem. With fans, coach, media and even some players against Calderon, irritated by the handling of the Ronaldo affair, his problems are greater still. ●



You're mine, son...Ferguson has kept hold of prize asset Ronaldo

> Negotiating with a furious Ferguson was always going to prove difficult. He was neither the wounded prey Madrid would have liked nor the willing seller they had counted on in the past

# Big mouth strikes again

## New Inter coach Jose Mourinho has entered a war of words with Juventus boss Claudio Ranieri

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

IF ITALIAN COMMENTATORS and fans had not yet worked out that the Special One – newly installed Internazionale coach Jose Mourinho – would liven things up a good deal around here, then they have probably got the message now. In what looks to be a taste of things to come, Mourinho and Juventus coach Claudio Ranieri got stuck into a tasty little bout of linguistic warfare in the first week of August, almost a month before the beginning of the Serie A season.

In truth, it was Ranieri, and not the Special One, who started the dust-up. Ranieri attempted to play down the significance of Juve's 3-0 defeat by Hamburg in a friendly on August 3, saying: "I'm not like Mourinho who needs to win all the time to feel that he is doing the right thing."

No sooner said than a reply was winging its way to Turin from Inter's training base at Appiano Gentile. "Ranieri is right," Mourinho said on his club's in-house TV channel. "I demand a lot of myself and I need to win to be happy. Maybe that is why I've won a lot in my career. Ranieri says that his mentality is such that he doesn't need to win to be sure that he is doing the job right. Maybe that's why at nearly 70 years of age [Ranieri is, in fact, 56] he has won only a couple of cups. Maybe he should change his mentality, but then again, perhaps he is too old for that."

Obviously, this bit of banter was intended first and foremost for media consumption (which is why you are reading it here). Both men know the media game and the need to make reassuring noises for their demanding fans. Yet, the alacrity with which Mourinho responded to Ranieri might serve as a warning to other Serie A coaches. Do not mess with this guy, he is quite capable of biting back.

Added spice, of course, also comes from the consideration that Ranieri was the man Roman Abramovich dumped at the end of his first season as Chelsea owner, replacing him with Mourinho. Also, as we all know, Ranieri won friends but not league titles at Stamford Bridge, while Mourinho won league titles but hardly made friends of everyone.

Even as the two coaches were bantering, we had one short, sharp, nasty reminder that all is not yet quite peace and harmony in the Italian playground. On that Sunday, in 30 degrees heat, about 40 ultras from fourth level Calabrian side Cosenza had chosen to make the 1,400km round trip to Norcia in Umbria for a friendly against Serie A side Siena.

Of course, the fans had more than football on their minds – their mission was apparently to settle a score or two with Siena supporters, with whom they have had an eight-year feud. When the Cosenza contingent arrived, a mini-battle broke out that ended with four people injured, six held overnight and one arrested. If there was any need for a reminder that Italian football still has problems to resolve this season, this absurd little incident provided it. It would seem that in Italy, football continues to be a release valve for myriad socio-economic tensions. The fact that underdeveloped and relatively poor Calabria is home to the 'Ndrangheta, the most powerful organised crime unit in Italy (more powerful than Cosa Nostra in Sicily), may not be irrelevant.

### Lippi back in charge

The new season, of course, starts with a "new" man in charge of the national team, namely 2006 World Cup winner Marcello Lippi, who had replaced Roberto Donadoni even before Euro 2008 had ended. Since the spring, Lippi had loomed like a spectre behind Donadoni, so much so that on the day he was formally presented as the new coach, Lippi felt obliged to defend his predecessor and deny that he had in any way undermined him.

"Every time that I was asked for my opinion on Italy, I obviously expressed a very positive view of both the squad and of the work of the new coach [Donadoni], who had clearly built up a very good relationship with the players," Lippi said. "My opinion of this Italy was always very positive and I kept on saying to people in the build-up to Euro 2008 that I didn't see any better teams around.

"When the [federation] president came to me [last March] and asked me if I was willing to take over the national team again, my answer was clear: 'You have to go and play at Euro 2008; if things go the way we hope they will, then it's only right that Donadoni remains in the job. In the case that things don't work out, then rest assured that I would be interested in returning' – and I added that in the meantime I would not accept any job offers from outside Italy. That's the way I handled things, without asking for anything, without signing anything and without looking for guarantees."

With regard to his team plans, Lippi refused to name individual players, saying only that all Italian players between the ages of 18 and 40 should aspire to play for the *Azzurri*. However, he did rule out calling on Roma forward Francesco Totti and Milan defender Alessandro Nesta to reconsider their international retirement.

Despite Italy's quarter-final elimination by Spain this summer, he considers the current squad highly competitive. Lippi says: "My idea is to take up with the team that I left [two years ago] because, in my opinion, that team is not one to be written off. On the contrary, it still has many good players who still have a lot to give to the national team.

> **"Ranieri says he doesn't need to win to be sure he is doing his job right. Maybe he should change his mentality, but perhaps he is too old for that"**
>
> *Jose Mourinho*

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Don't mess with me... Mourinho wasted no time in responding to Ranieri's jibe

> **Everybody at Inter, they all have only one objective in mind, the Champions League. But let Mourinho work away, he's a great coach**
>
> *Marcello Lippi puts no pressure on the Special One*

"As for Italy at Euro 2008, we played some games that were better than others, but we played in a manner where you can no longer say that Italy is only about *catenaccio* and defensive football. We were determined and concrete, yes, but we were also modern in our attitude."

A major factor behind Lippi's decision to hand in his cards after Italy won the World Cup was that his son Davide was implicated in the *Calciopoli* match-fixing scandal.

However, two years on, the coach argues that Italian football has largely left that difficult moment behind. He says: "Italian football is like cheese – if you have a decent Tuscan pecorino in your cellar and it gets a bit of blue mould on it, you don't throw away the entire cheese, you just scrape off the mould and then you eat it. That's the way the Italian football world is, something that Italy should be proud of.

"Italy are still world champions at both national team and club level. We've got a very good team at the Olympics, we've got a very strong Serie B league and we've got the best coaches in the world – and I'm not just talking about Capello, Ancelotti and Prandelli, but about guys at lower levels who are very good. Mark my words, Italian football is still very, very good and very, very strong."

More recently, when asked by sports daily *Gazzetta Dello Sport* to make predictions about the new season, Lippi stated only the obvious when underlining the pressure under which Mourinho will operate. "Everybody up at Inter, from president Moratti down to the guys in the boot room, they have all got only one objective in mind, the Champions League. But let Mourinho work away, he's a great coach."

Put another way, Mourinho winning the Serie A title with Inter will mean nothing, given that under Roberto Mancini the club have won the last three titles. Indeed, only the Champions League will do.

### No problem

As for Juventus, the club with which Lippi won no fewer than five league titles, the coach has no problem understanding why Mourinho and Ranieri have already exchanged barbed comments. Juventus, he says, will strike fear in a lot of hearts.

"Nedved, Del Piero and Camoranesi are looking sharp, and when the old fellows are well that means that everything is going very nicely in the 'family'," Lippi says.

"This is a very tough looking Juventus. [Brazilian striker] Amauri is a bomb, while [Dane Christian] Poulsen is going to be one of the revelations of the season. You'll see, Juventus will strike fear in Europe once more."

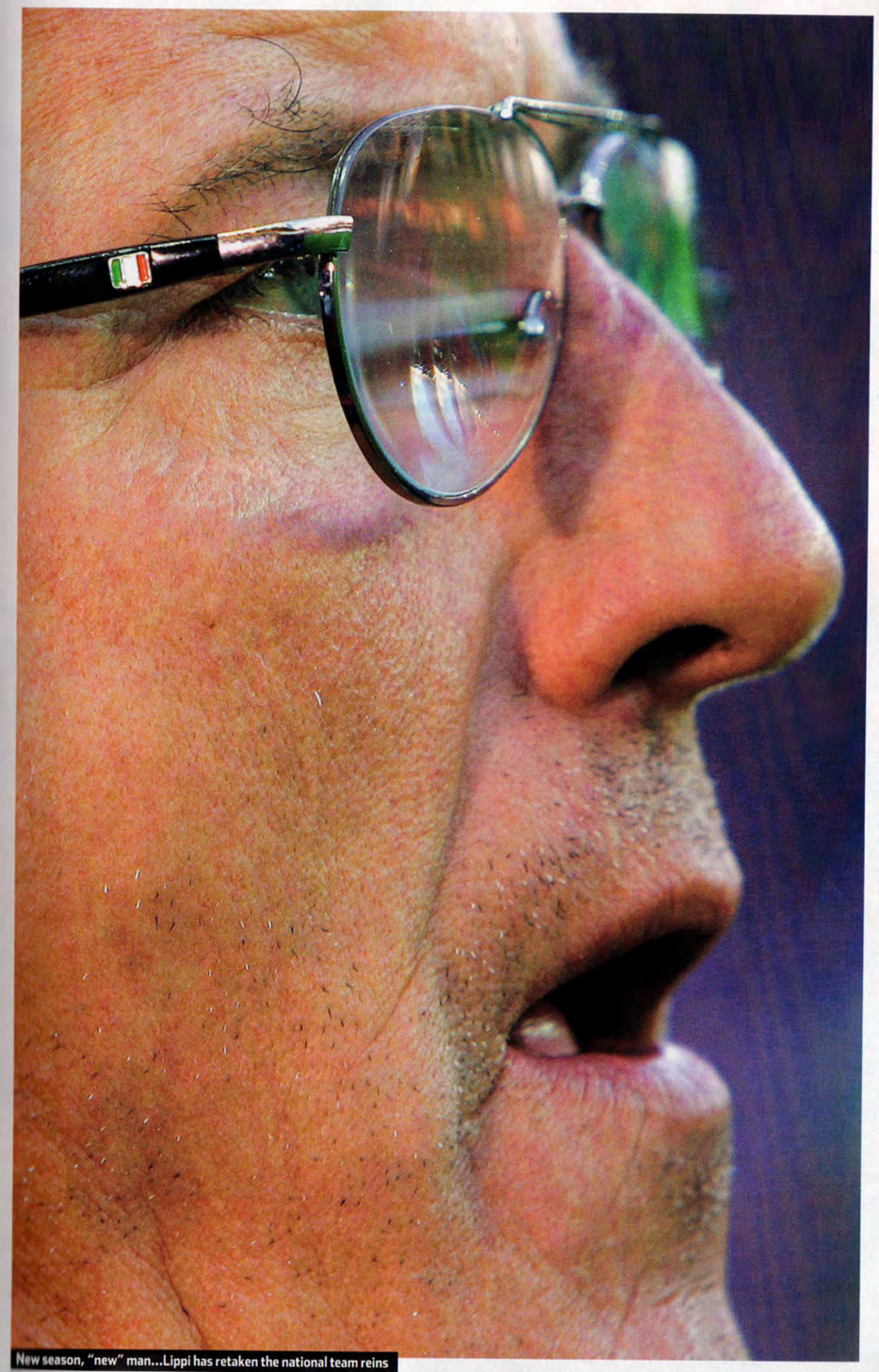
As for Italy's other big clubs, Lippi believes that Milan have done well to buy Ronaldinho, that Fiorentina will prove to be a real dark horse in the Champions League, that Inter start off in the second row of the Champions League grid – just behind Manchester United – and that Roma are not that much further behind.

Here is hoping that Lippi's generally optimistic view of Italian football proves well founded. ●

Beaten but unbowed...Ranieri believes he is on the right track with Juventus despite the 3-0 loss to Hamburg







New season, "new" man...Lippi has retaken the national team reins

> **This is a very tough looking Juventus. You'll see, they will strike fear in Europe once more**
>
> *Lippi talks up his former club's chances*

# Bombed squad

## Flamengo dropped down the table after selling some of their best players – and the fans exploded

TIM VICKERY
in Rio de Janeiro

FLAMENGO COULD RUN but they could not hide. In mid-July the Rio giants topped the Brazilian championship table; just a month later they had dropped to seventh after a string of defeats, and their ever-demanding fans were unhappy.

The day after yet another loss the club changed the venue of their training session to stay out of harm's way. It was only a stay of execution. The next day, when they returned to their normal training ground, a group of supporters were waiting, and showed their disgust by hurling home-made bombs on to the field.

Much of the blame for Flamengo's slump can be attributed to the opening up of the global transfer window. Needing an injection of cash to pay the squad's wages, Flamengo parted company with free-scoring Marcinho (to Al Jazeera in the United Arab Emirates), big centre-forward Souza (Panathinaikos) and talented attacking midfielder Renato Augusto (Bayer Leverkusen).

Every year at this time European clubs come to swoop on promising Brazilian players, some with just a handful of top division games behind them – they include Palmeiras centre-back Henrique, who Barcelona picked up and loaned to Leverkusen, Portuguesa striker Diogo (Olympiakos) and Vasco da Gama midfielder or wing-back Pablo (Zaragoza).

But players have also been moving in. The Brazilian currency, the Real, has grown in value considerably over the past 18 months, making it easier to repatriate players who are unsettled in Europe – such as Marcelinho, who has joined Flamengo from Wolfsburg, and Daniel Carvalho, back on loan at Internacional from CSKA Moscow.

And there is another trend. With the Real now also much stronger than the Argentinian Peso, Brazilian clubs are thinking about hoovering up talent from their southern neighbours – and elsewhere in the continent. Internacional snapped up left-footed playmaker Andres D'Alessandro from San Lorenzo. Flamengo were set to sign veteran Uruguay centre-forward Richard Morales, until he was scared off by the incident with the home-made bombs.

With all the comings and goings it is no surprise that the Brazilian championship is a wildly unstable competition. Local magazine *Placar* publishes an excellent guide to the season. Come the halfway mark it has to put out a new guide because the squads have changed so much.

This is clearly a silly state of affairs. For the foreseeable future Brazil will continue to lose its best players to Europe. But there is no need for it to happen mid-season. The problem is that Brazil has got itself out of sync with the global calendar. Everyone – even federation president Ricardo Teixeira – concedes that this is undesirable.

But when it comes to doing anything about it, there is a widespread refusal to face reality. The most bizarre excuses are presented for not bringing the Brazilian calendar into line – such as factors affecting the fiscal year, or the view that the players are unwilling to take holidays in July, mid-winter in Brazil.

The simple fact is that Brazil has been out of sync for only the past five years. Until then the season was divided in two, as is the norm in South America. The state championships were played from January to June, and the national competition ran from August to December.

It had to change because the state competitions make no financial or footballing sense, so they were reduced. They now finish in May, and the longer national championship then runs straight through for the next seven months.

### Political importance

The state championships were saved because of their political importance. The state federations, for example, hold the balance of power in the election of the federation president. Take away their local competition and they would serve little function.

Incidentally, this balance of forces is already hindering Brazil's preparations to stage the 2014 World Cup. There is clearly a reluctance to exclude any of the prospective venue cities (18 have bid) because of the fear that regions shut out of the party will become opponents of the administration.

South Africa had an objective points system to decide which cities will stage games in 2010. Brazil seems inclined to push the decision towards FIFA.

Getting rid of the state championships could be Brazilian football's equivalent of the Premier League breakaway in England. While this does not happen, Brazil will have an out-of-sync calendar and a national championship operating massively short of its potential.

The instability of the playing personnel is matched in the dugout. By the halfway stage there had been 18 coaching changes, and only eight of the 20 clubs had been under the same man for all 19 rounds.

In early July, Renato Gaucho was only a penalty shoot-out away from taking Fluminense to their first Libertadores Cup triumph. But in mid-August he was sacked, with the team second from bottom in the table.

Santos were also in the relegation zone, suffering a Libertadores hangover after going out in the quarter-finals.

By contrast, Gremio, five points clear at the halfway mark, were profiting from failure. In April they were knocked out of both their state championship and the Brazilian Cup and coach Celso Roth was under intense pressure. But their lack of competitive action gave them time to prepare properly for the national championship. They took full advantage and the benefits show in the statistics. They had lost only twice in 19 games and had conceded just 12 goals, seven fewer than anyone else.

The transfer window could put their continuity at risk. Roth may well be sweating until midnight on August 31 on losing highly-rated 20-year-old centre-back Leo. ●

> **"Flamengo were set to sign Uruguay centre-forward Richard Morales, until he was scared off by the home-made bombs incident"**

*Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums*

Fan power...Flamengo supporters vented their anger after the sale of star players was followed by the team's slump from top of the table to seventh

# Where's the quality?

## Aside from the outstanding Leo Messi, the Olympic football tournament was a big disappointment

KEIR RADNEDGE
in Beijing

QUALITY IS THE ISSUE. Viewed from the outside, sports at the Olympic Games appear to exist in their own bubble. Fans take a direct interest in their own discipline and become aficionados briefly of whatever else may hit the headlines.

Viewed from within, however, the world's sports present a far more complicated face. And football comes off badly.

Swimming, in Beijing, presented the record-crushing Michael Phelps, then in track and field the explosive Usain Bolt. Football boasted Leo Messi, but he was outstanding specifically because he rose above a mediocrity that did the game no credit.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter got it wrong at just about every twist and turn. First, he fronted a disastrous, Canute-style resistance about player eligibility for the Games, then he praised the standard of football as "never having been higher".

That was just before he sat down to watch the men's quarter-final between Brazil and Cameroon, a game that generated 56 fouls, 12 yellow cards, one sending-off and enough acting to sweep the Oscars.

The 24 games of the group stage produced a miserable 51 goals, an average of just over two per match.

I believe the option to include players aged over 23 contributes to the inconsistency in quality. The older stars are parachuted into, mostly, youth teams who have grown up together, and often steal the show. They contribute nothing to team-building and still less to dressing-room morale. The tournament is thus turned into an event with no constructive value; a dead end.

The women's tournament was no great shakes either. There is no longer such a significant gap between the traditional powers – the United States, Germany, Sweden and Norway – and the rest. This appears to be as much because the giants are losing their edge as the rest of the pack catching up.

One factor in football's diminished role at the Olympics is the banishment of most matches from the host city. The only men's match in the central Bird's Nest stadium was the Final. Most teams missed the opening ceremony and only a handful stayed in the Olympic village.

Most matches were scattered around four other venues – Tianjin, Qinhuangdao, Shenyang and Shanghai – the latter two hours' flight to the far more humid south.

Many of the players felt that they had been dropped into second-class status before they had even kicked a ball in anger. Argentina's Sergio Aguero said: "Being in Shanghai for our first two games was like being in some Under-20 tournament because there were no other sports around." Nor did the wrangling between FIFA and the clubs do anything for the haphazard quality of the tournament.

Indeed, Belgium proved the most successful of the European contingent once they had outlasted the distractions over the comings and goings of Hamburg defender Vincent Kompany.

### Continued struggles

The men's tournament was almost more intriguing for who did not progress. Not one of the "home" Asian nations (including Australia) made it even as far as the quarter-finals. The major disappointment were China themselves, who continue to struggle to make an international mark.

They have reached the World Cup finals only once, in 2002, in neighbouring Japan and South Korea, and then they failed to gain a point or even score.

Their sorry showing at the Olympics was even more humiliating – the Chinese nation had been conditioned "to win" in terms of overall medals, even in football.

The final three-goal defeat by joint favourites Brazil was not an embarrassment in itself. The Chinese had already wrecked their dreams, first by kicking manager Ratomir Dujkovic upstairs three weeks before the Games, then by their failures out on the pitch against the students of New Zealand (a poor 1-1 draw) and against Belgium (a 2-0 defeat in which two players were sent off).

In an online survey, 41 per cent of respondents called for the squad to be dissolved. Former captain Fan Zhiyi summed up public mood: "This was an opportunity for Chinese soccer to be honoured, but in the end it was dishonoured. FA officials need to reflect upon themselves and their decisions. Our grassroots are withering and our professional league is also spiralling downwards and can produce few quality players."

As the evidence of the rest of the tournament suggested, China will rarely again benefit from such an opportunity to register their potential on the world football map. ●

> "Many of the players felt that they had been dropped into second-class status before they had even kicked a ball in anger"

*Read Keir Radnedge's Olympic Final report in next month's issue.*

*Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums*

China crisis...the host nation endured a dismal Olympics, including managing only a 1-1 draw against the students of New Zealand

# Galaxy implode

## Ruud Gullit paid the price for a series of poor performances by the Los Angeles side

PAUL GARDNER
in New York

SO MUCH FOR sexy soccer. Ruud Gullit came to Los Angeles Galaxy, he saw, but he conquered nothing. After a mere nine months he resigned (resigned being one of those management words that can mean whatever you want it to mean), leaving Galaxy – and David Beckham – in the hands of assistant coach Cobi Jones, whose coaching experience can be summed up briefly as non-existent.

When Beckham arrived last year the coach was Frank Yallop. He departed after a decidedly mediocre season – not at all what was expected by Galaxy's owner, AEG, which had spent all that money acquiring Beckham. Gullit, Yallop's replacement, failed to improve the team's performance, so he went – and, on the same day, the club also showed the door to general manager Alexi Lalas.

"We are stepping up and doing what we need to do to straighten this thing out," said AEG CEO Tim Leiweke, the very man responsible for hiring Lalas and signing Beckham.

A couple of weeks earlier, Leiweke had visited the team in their dressing room and reportedly issued an ultimatum: get things right – meaning, win some games – or else.

The players' response was to lose to San Jose Earthquakes – arguably the weakest team in the League – thus prolonging their winless streak to seven games.

Hence the massacre. Was it justified? Possibly. Gullit seemed strangely uninvolved with his job; no doubt he was confused and frustrated by the MLS regulations that limit player signings and squad changes, but that hardly seems much of an excuse for a professional. Lalas has now been general manager at three MLS clubs – San Jose, New York Red Bulls and Galaxy – and his achievements are about the same as Jones' coaching record.

The word is that Galaxy were not a happy team. Certainly, Lalas did not get along well with Gullit. Understandable. Gullit's appointment was sponsored, in effect, by Terry Byrne, one of Beckham's personal advisers. Lalas was left out of the negotiations, it seems.

Despite the usual rumours of dressing room "factions", the players had little to say. Landon Donovan, the number two player after Beckham, admitted to having some slight differences with Gullit, but said they were soon smoothed over. Then he quickly indulged in some mild self-flagellation, saying that the players "hadn't been doing our jobs, either". Midfielder Peter Vagenas was much harder: "The players should feel embarrassed. Two people lost their jobs because of our athletic shortcomings."

From Beckham, Mr Nice Guy, came the usual assembly of harmless platitudes: "When there's trouble in clubs it can have a good effect or a bad effect...At the end of the day it's all about the team and how we perform."

But the players fluffed their lines. In the first – and only – game under Jones, they managed only a 2-2 draw against Chivas USA. Nevertheless, Beckham managed to see that result as "a triumph".

Speculation about a new coach quickly focused on one man, former national team coach Bruce Arena. He was an obvious choice given that foreigners were now out of favour and that Arena was out of a job. His last employment was at Red Bulls, a highly unimpressive 2007 season when, curious to relate, he displayed the same symptoms of half-heartedness and lack of interest that Gullit evinced at Galaxy. But Arena brings immense experience of international soccer and of MLS. He is, says Leiweke, "the best coach for Galaxy and one of the best coaches in the history of the League" – referring to Arena's triumphs in the early days of MLS, when he won two championships with DC United.

Arena duly took over from Gullit. Not only that, he took over from Lalas as well, becoming the first coach/general manager in MLS.

Yet, despite all the melodrama, the team are not a total disaster. Inconsistent, yes. In their first 20 games they scored 40 goals, which is a pretty sexy achievement; alas, they also gave up 42 goals, not so exciting. But surely, with a few adjustments...? The general feeling is now that if Arena can't make things work at the dysfunctional (Leiweke's word) Galaxy, then no one can.

### Olympic obsession

The Olympic Games is a four-yearly obsession in the USA. It dominates TV and newspapers and general conversation for a couple of weeks, and then quickly disappears. There is, after all, no such grouping as Olympic fans. But such is the importance of the Olympic moment that American soccer goes to immense lengths to prepare and enter a men's team in the Games. And every time the team disappoint – something that can hardly be expected to do anything to help the popularity of the sport grow in the country.

So we got the same old story this year. The USA, having assembled a won one, drawn one, lost one record, did not get out of the group. There were some convincing excuses. The USA had tough opponents – Japan, Holland and Nigeria. And they were unlucky – if you view things that way. In the second game they were leading the Dutch, the European Under-21 champions, 2-1 and gave up the equaliser from a free-kick with only seconds left.

A win would have ensured the Americans qualified for the quarter-finals; instead, they had to be sure of at least a draw in their final game against Nigeria. That game already presented a problem because the USA had to

> **"The word is Galaxy were not a happy team. Lalas did not get along well with Gullit, whose appointment was in effect sponsored by one of Beckham's personal advisers"**

*Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums*

He came, he saw, he resigned... Gullit's LA experience lasted just nine months

take the field without two regular starters – Freddy Adu and Michael Bradley – both suspended for picking up yellow cards. Things immediately got a whole lot worse when defender Michael Orozco was sent off after only three minutes. Yet the Americans shrugged off the setbacks and played their best game before going down 2-1.

The USA's biggest problem was scoring. Despite having some of the best young attacking players yet produced by the country – including Adu and Jozy Altidore – coach Peter Novak was wedded to caution. In their qualifying games – against the likes of Cuba and Panama – the USA managed to score only six goals in five games. They then went on to play in the Toulon tournament, where they fared even worse, losing all three matches and scoring only twice. In China, even with the addition of overage player Brian McBride, a forward with English Premier League experience at Fulham, they managed only four goals in three games.

The Olympic odyssey needs careful thought. Olympic glory is a fleeting thing, even should the USA manage a medal. But the biggest problem is the disruption to MLS, whose season is in full swing during the tournament. For MLS clubs, whose squads are not known for their strength in depth, being forced to do without key players for a couple of weeks is a serious drawback.

There is also another, unavoidable problem for MLS, one that applies to most countries. The Olympics is a showcase for young players. A good performance, and the European clubs will pounce, and MLS loses another of its starlets. That is what happened to 22-year-old Toronto midfielder Maurice Edu, who excelled for the USA – particularly since he was playing out of position as a defender. Rangers stepped in, and for a £2.75million fee Edu will be calling Glasgow his home for the next five years.

### Slight compensation

Losing promising young Americans – however rewarding their sale may be financially – is not something that pleases MLS. There is some slight compensation in that a steady stream of Americans, at the end of their European careers or unable to make things work over there, return to the States. This season, McBride has returned from England to join Chicago Fire, and Pat Noonan quickly gave up on Norway to come back – though he will join Columbus Crew rather than his original club, New England Revolution.

Throughout these comings and goings, Donovan, arguably the best young American, has remained steadfastly with Galaxy. After a couple of abortive early attempts to start a career in Germany, he announced that the USA was the place for him.

So we're back where we started – with dysfunctional Galaxy. When the club started to implode, Donovan was the League's leading scorer with 14 goals in 17 games. And suddenly – even though he was having his best-ever year – he did not sound so sure that he would stay, speculating that he would seriously consider a good offer.

It looks as though Arena's first task may be convincing Donovan that Galaxy are destined for a shining future with enough fame and glory to convince him to stay. ●

> "The biggest problem for the USA was scoring. In their qualifying games they managed only six goals in five games. In China only four in three games"

Off...Orozco's early dismissal meant the USA were always up against it in their final Olympic group game against Nigeria



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Meet the new boss...but not everyone welcomed the appointment of 68-year-old ex-Czech Republic coach Bruckner



# Father figure

## Veteran Karel Bruckner was a shock appointment as national team coach

HARRY MILTNER in Vienna

EURO 2008 IS HISTORY. The footballing world is already looking ahead to the World Cup. Austria have hired the doyen of Czech coaches, Karel Bruckner, to lead the team to South Africa. However, he has not exactly been welcomed with open arms.

Austria are currently only 105th in the FIFA rankings, a position that has placed the Euro 2008 co-hosts in a tough World Cup qualifying group. Bruckner's new team will have to battle against France, Romania, Serbia, Lithuania and the Faroe Islands for a spot at the finals. However, Andreas Ivanschitz and co may be able to capitalise on a fortunate draw – they will play the three strongest teams at home first.

Arjen Robben, speaking during Real Madrid's summer training camp in Austria, buoyed the nation's footballers by saying: "Qualifying for the second stage of such a big tournament as Euro 2008 is always tough for smaller footballing countries such as Austria. But I have seen some of their matches, and their displays were promising. Given time to develop, I believe this young Austrian team can play a bigger role on the world stage in a couple of years."

Bruckner, who led the Czechs to Euro 2004, the 2006 World Cup and Euro 2008, said: "I watched Austria's games at Euro 2008 and I know there are a couple of young talents. However, there is still a lot of work ahead, as our goal is to qualify for South Africa."

Austria have not appeared at a World Cup since 1998, when they were eliminated in the group stage following draws against Chile and Cameroon and a 2-1 loss to Italy.

The FA were shocked by Josef Hickersberger's departure as national coach after Euro 2008. However, Bruckner's appointment was a bigger surprise to many, since the 68-year-old had announced his retirement after the tournament. Even his wife Irena was amazed, declaring him "completely crazy" after agreeing to take the job following "two weeks of intense discussions".

Asked about his sudden change of mind, Bruckner said: "I realised I did not want to sit at home and grow old. I want to stay on the world stage in the football business."

He added age was not the question, but performance. "The point of the game is success, and success has a lot to do with experience. After all, it was the oldest coach at Euro 2008, Luis Aragones, who won the trophy."

This is Bruckner's first coaching post abroad – he is deeply rooted in his hometown of Olomouc and has refused to move to Vienna.

"I need my regular surroundings and the company of my family. However, I will travel a lot to watch my new players and visit Austria on a regular basis."

Bruckner, who is pocketing £550,000 per year (his initial contract covers the World Cup qualifiers), started his job by setting his bosses some homework. He drew up a list of 60 items that he has asked the Austrian FA to work through. "I have little time to learn a lot about Austria and its football. So I need a lot of information at the start."

Whether Bruckner is the right man for the job has been questioned widely in Austria and across the border. After the Czechs were eliminated early both at the 2006 World Cup and at Euro 2008, Bruckner was blamed for practising antiquated football. Austrian playing legends Hans Krankl and Toni Polster have both weighed in with criticism, claiming that Bruckner neither knows the players well enough, nor speaks the language adequately. Moreover, they claimed he lacks the drive of a young, modern coach.

### More criticism

The coach received even more criticism by hiring former Slovakia coach Jan Kocian, who speaks perfect Czech and German, as his assistant, instead of Andreas Herzog. Austria's most-capped player was Hickersberger's assistant and had been expected by many to actually take the coaching reins. Instead, he will operate as the new "team manager", Bruckner's native link between the FA, the Austrian League and the players. "Herzog is not my assistant, he is a strong character and my colleague," said Bruckner, who is known as Klekih-Petra (the white father), after the character in the famous Apache Winnetou novel.

"It's a scandal. I cannot understand, why Herzog was not selected," Krankl thundered.

But former Czech international Antonin Panenka, who won two Austrian league titles with Rapid Wien, has backed Bruckner. "He is a very experienced coach who has shown he can find a good way with young talents," Panenka said.

Unlike Hickersberger, Bruckner will focus first of all on Austrians playing in the big European leagues. Sebastian Prodl, Martin Harnik, Christian Fuchs, Ramazan Ozcan, Andreas Ibertsberger and Umit Korkmaz all play in Germany; Roland Linz is in Portugal with Sporting Braga; Alexander Manninger, Gyorgy Garics and Jurgen Saumel earn their living in Serie A; Martin Stranzl stars for Spartak Moscow; Roman Kienast has just joined Henrik Larsson up front at Helsingborgs in Sweden; Ivanschitz and keeper Jurgen Macho play in Greece; Thomas Prager and Marko Arnautovic are in the Dutch Eredivisie; and Emanuel Pogatetz and Paul Scharner have left their marks on the English Premier League. The return to the squad of Scharner, who was dropped by Hickersberger just before the start of Euro 2008 after a disagreement, is keenly anticipated.

Bruckner's first two games were tough: an August friendly against world champions Italy and the opening World Cup qualifier against France in early September. "There is not a lot of time to find my team for these matches. But I came here to prepare the Austrians for winning, not for losing," Bruckner said. ●

> **"I realised I did not want to sit at home and grow old. I want to stay on the world stage in football. The point of the game is success, and success has a lot to do with experience"**

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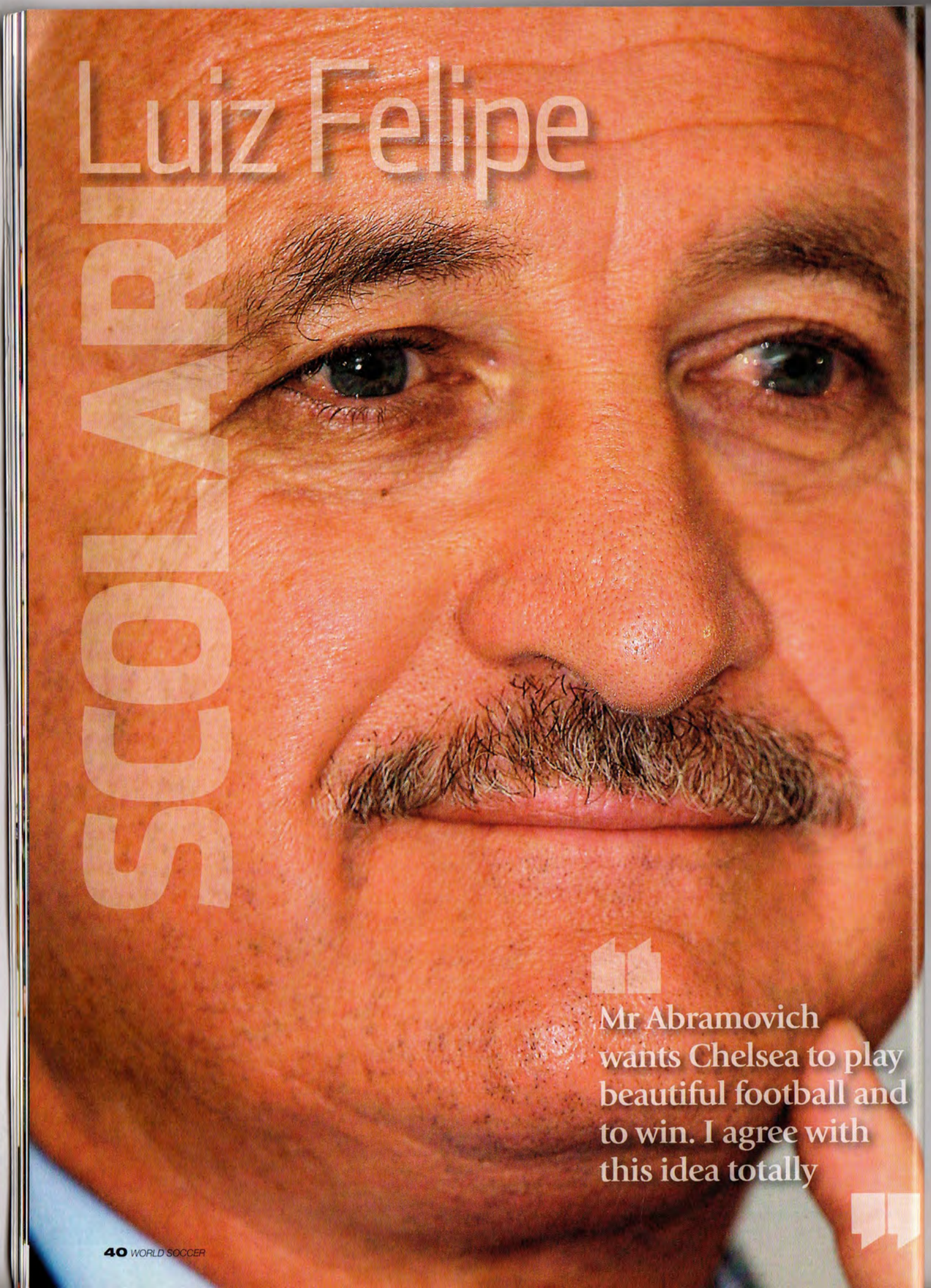




# Opportunity knocks

## The Brazilian is relishing his new challenge as Chelsea manager

**WHY HAVE YOU taken your first job in European club management at the age of 59?**
It was not just about money, as some people have said. I see this as a challenge that I could not turn down, and I have never had an opportunity like this in my life before. It is a difficult task, but the invitation from Chelsea was impossible to ignore and I'm ready to accept the pressure that goes with the job.

**Will you give owner Roman Abramovich the beautiful football he craves?**
Football can be beautiful, but you have to find a way to win as well. Both at the same time are perfect, but this is not always possible. If I have to do something else to win some games, the beautiful part may not be possible, but we will see. Don't forget, I am Brazilian, so in an ideal world we will play perfect football.

**Are you concerned that Abramovich may try to interfere with your work at Chelsea?**
My meetings with Mr Abramovich have been very pleasant and we speak about our ideas. He wants Chelsea to play beautiful football and to win. I agree with this idea totally. He did not try to tell me his opinion about who he wants in the team. We talked about different players and shared our views. He is very keen to have a happy team unit, and we are very close on this.

**Abramovich has a passion to win the Champions League, so is this your top priority at Chelsea this season?**
This is not the case. If I say that my only focus is on the Champions League, just imagine what kind of effect this may have on my players. They will go into a Carling Cup game and say we don't have to push so hard here. The same is true with the FA Cup and the Premier League every week. I don't want to get to the situation where we are looking at Europe and saying this is our main target.

**The Champions League is the one trophy Chelsea have failed to win, so you can understand the desire to win the competition.**
Absolutely, and I want to win the Champions League as well. It is the world cup of club football, and as I have already won the real World Cup with Brazil in 2002, it would be amazing to add the European title to my memories. I have said before that I want to try and win every competition we enter this season, and this is true.

**The previous Chelsea manager, Avram Grant, was sacked after missing out on the Champions League by one penalty kick in May, so do you feel you need to win the competition to survive at Chelsea?**
I am not afraid about losing my job at this moment! I have only been here a few weeks and don't think I will get sacked yet. But yes, if I do not win titles this season, I know what will happen. The same is true for the coach at Arsenal, Manchester United and Liverpool. We are all expected to win, and the ones who fail suffer the consequences.

**Jose Mourinho and Rafael Benitez have been criticised for changing their teams too much during their time in English football. Will you try to find a settled team?**
This is not the way football works. I will select those who show the hunger and desire to succeed. I need players who are passionate for every game and I will have no priority in my teams. I spoke about this when I arrived in front of the players. It's my job to choose a team to take to the field and the seven to sit on the bench. If some players are out for one game, two games, they should not panic. If they work hard, their chance will come.

**So you don't believe in the notion of having a first-choice 11?**
Not really. Do not forget my history when it comes to making team changes. The only two players I didn't use in my squad at the 2002 World Cup with Brazil were the spare goalkeepers, and with Portugal there were only one or two outfield players I didn't use for major tournaments. If a change can help the team, I make it.

**Do you fear you will miss the challenge of international football?**
I will miss Portugal and our project there. I don't agree that club football is better than in national teams because it's so fantastic when you are in a World Cup or European Championship. The atmosphere and excitement around the big games is so incredible, and it's hard to beat that.

**So what do you see as the advantages of being in club management?**
You miss the idea of living day to day with your players in the international job and getting to know how they work. In a national team, you feel more like a politician representing a nation in a world meeting, but club football is different and I am looking forward to this at Chelsea.

**Will your philosophy change now that you have more time to get to know your players in the club environment?**
It won't change too much. Lack of professionalism is the one failing I cannot tolerate and it was the first thing I said to my players when I came to Chelsea. Obviously, I knew all the players from the television and it will take some time to understand them as players and psychologically. I also don't want to be stuck with one formation and one way of playing. You need to be versatile to win big competitions. ●

*Interview by Kevin Palmer*

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# Euro Club Guide 2008-09

SPECIAL SECTION

## The EXPERT guide to the 144 TEAMS in the Champions League & UEFA Cup

Compiled by Nick Bidwell and Gavin Hamilton with contributions from Stefan Baumgarten (Switzerland), Sam Beckwith (Czech Republic), Dan Brennan (Scotland), Rab Christie (Iceland), Sean Creedon (Republic of Ireland), Peterjon Cresswell (Hungary, Slovakia), Klaas-Jan Droppert (Holland), Victor Gusev (Russia), Pentti Hietanen (Finland, Sweden), Jim Holden (Denmark), Howard Johnson (France), Dariusz Kurowski (Poland), Ori Lewis (Israel), Harry Miltner (Austria), Vladimir Novak (Serbia), Gezim Nushi (Albania), Sigurd Odegaard (Norway), Rumen Paytashev (Bulgaria), Pedro Pinto (Portugal), Zdravko Reic (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia), Radu Timofte (Romania), Oleg Zadernovsky (Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine).

## AAB AALBORG (DEN)

# Schnaps to it

**The Danish champions never had a better chance of returning to the Champions League group stage**

Stiffener…Bogelund (left)

AAB WERE THE first Danish side to play in the Champions League group stage, in 1995-96, when they beat Panathinaikos and drew with Porto but nevertheless finished bottom. They have not appeared in it since, but had a great chance to end the wait, having been drawn against relative minnows FBK Kaunas in the third qualifying round this time round.

The Aalborg outfit were impressive in winning the Danish League last season and look a stronger proposition than in previous European campaigns. The acquisition of international defender Kasper Bogelund has stiffened the side, and Brazilian midfielder Caca is a clever player.

Title-winning boss Erik Hamren has departed for Rosenborg in Norway, but his replacement, Bruce Rioch, the former Arsenal manager, has had experience of working in Denmark, with OB Odense.

AaB made a bad start to their Danish title defence, losing their first two matches. But they were back to form in the Champions League second qualifying round, thrashing Bosnian side Modrica 5-0 at home and 7-1 on aggregate.

The crowd in Aalborg, in the north of Jutland, give the team some good support, fuelled no doubt by a glass or two of akvavit schnaps, which is brewed in the town.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**BRUCE RIOCH**
The Scotsman took charge in the summer following the departure of Erik Hamren to Rosenborg.

**THE PLAYER**
**KARIM ZAZA**
The Moroccan goalkeeper was a key figure in the title-winning campaign last season.

### STICKING WITH WINNING FORMULA

A 4-3-1-2 formation served AaB well last season so they are likely to stick with it. Swede Andreas Johansson plays in the hole behind the strikers, one of whom, Jeppe Curth, was prolific last season. Thomas Augustinussen plays the anchor role in midfield. Martin Pedersen is a reliable left-back.

## ANORTHOSIS FAMAGUSTA (CYP)

# No fear

**Coach Ketsbaia has helped rid the team of their inferiority complex in European competition**

Towering…Dellas

THE CYPRIOT TITLE holders have certainly made their mark in the Champions League in the past three years, reaching the third qualifying round in 2005 by eliminating Trabzonspor and repeating the feat this summer with a 4-3 aggregate victory over a supposedly much stronger Rapid Wien.

Coach Temuri Ketsbaia, the former Dinamo Tbilisi, Newcastle and Georgia winger, has instilled an indomitable team spirit and rid the players of the inferiority complex they used to display when facing opposition from bigger footballing nations. Now, as they demonstrated in their 3-0 first leg win at home to Rapid, the fear factor has evaporated and they have no hesitation seizing the initiative from the first whistle.

The team's greater confidence is also partly down to the increased amount of top-level European experience in their ranks – recently Anorthosis signed a pair of golden oldies: towering Greek centre-back Traianos Dellas from AEK Athens and Brazilian attacking midfielder Savio (from Desportiva Capixaba), who was a Champions League winner with Real Madrid in 2000.

Anorthosis play in Larnaca having had to leave Famagusta after the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, but their original town's name is retained in the title of the club.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**TEMURI KETSBAIA**
The fiery, unpredictable Georgian has spent a decade as player and coach at Anorthosis and is renowned for his ability to push the right psychological buttons of his team.

**THE PLAYER**
**TRAIANOS DELLAS**
The giant Greek national team libero insists he is far from finished, having been released by AEK Athens. A cornerstone of his country's Euro 2004 triumph.

### SAFETY AWAY, ASSERTION AT HOME

Ketsbaia has two basic configurations for European competition – a safety-first, counter-attacking 4-5-1 for difficult away games, and a more assertive 4-4-2 for home ties. In both, there is much emphasis on physical strength and controlled aggression. But Anorthosis also have the ability to play with their heads.

## ARSENAL (ENG)

# Prime movers

**The departure of two midfielders at their peak means the Gunners may be lacking this season**

Nearly a goner…Adebayor

THE GUNNERS HAVE suffered major player departures in the past: Marc Overmars and Emmanuel Petit to Barcelona in 2000, Patrick Vieira to Juventus in 2005, Thierry Henry to Barcelona in 2007. On those occasions, the judgement of manager Arsene Wenger – that these players had contributed their best days to Arsenal – was proved correct, confirming the popular view at the club that "Arsene knows".

But this summer, Arsenal lost two players at their peak, both midfielders: Alexander Hleb left for Barcelona, Mathieu Flamini joined Milan. That a third, striker Emmanuel Adebayor, came close to leaving should be a huge concern for Wenger, who has not won a trophy for four seasons.

Brazilian Gilberto Silva has also departed, to Panathinaikos, and Arsenal look thin in midfield. It also means a huge responsibility has been placed on the slender young shoulders of Cesc Fabregas.

That said, plenty of exciting young talent has entered the first-team frame: Samir Nasri and Carlos Vela from overseas, Fran Merida and Jack Wilshere from the academy.

The Emirates stadium is now generating extra funds, but the board still seem reluctant to pay high-end wages. A potential takeover from competing billionaires Alisher Usmanov and Stan Kroenke could also be an unwelcome distraction.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE MANAGER**
**ARSENE WENGER**
The Frenchman is in his 13th season at Arsenal and will be a hard act to follow if he decides to move back to his homeland.

**THE PLAYER**
**CESC FABREGAS**
The young midfielder, on a high after Spain's Euro 2008 triumph, is Arsenal's central figure.

### ADEBAYOR THE ATTACK'S FOCAL POINT

Adebayor has given Arsenal's attack the central focal point it lacked during the Thierry Henry era, but there is still a tendency for the team to overplay. Vela could surprise but Eduardo Da Silva's injury absence limits attacking options. The midfield lacks authority, and doubts persist about keeper Manuel Almunia.

## ARTMEDIA PETRZALKA (SLK)

# Weiss squad

**The coach has led the Bratislava side to each of their Slovak titles in two separate spells in charge**

Tampere topped…full-back Cisovsky (left)

PETRZALKA ARE BEST known for their shock 5-0 defeat of Celtic in 2005 which put them into the Champions League group stage for the first time. If they made it again this season, the shock would be even greater, since they faced Juventus in the third qualifying round.

The modest Bratislava club won their second league title this spring, overtaking Zilina in the run-in and eventually beating them by an impressive 11 points. Vladimir Weiss has held the coaching reins both times Petrzalka have won the League, either side of a stint at Russian side Saturn Ramenskoye. But his recent appointment to simultaneously lead the Slovak national team is a potential problem for the club.

It is not the only one. Chairman Ivan Kmotrik has left for Slovan Bratislava, and there is uncertainty about the club's ground, a ramshackle affair on the south bank of the Danube. In fact, the stadium has been abandoned in recent weeks, with home games played at outlying Senec.

Petrzalka could also be doing better on the pitch, ceding advantage to Zilina and Kosice in the early stages of their domestic title defence. The indifferent start included a 2-0 home defeat by Zilina. But they convincingly beat Tampere United of Finland, 7-3 on aggregate, in the Champions League second qualifying round.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**VLADIMIR WEISS**
Has taken over as Slovakia coach but will continue to lead Petrzalka, too. A member of Czechoslovakia's Italia 90 squad.

**THE PLAYER**
**JAN KOZAK**
The playmaker, a national team regular, had a brief spell at West Bromwich Albion under Bryan Robson before heading back to Petrzalka to help them win the Slovak title this spring.

### VELICKY CREATES THE LINK

Weiss plays Stanislav Velicky as a linking defensive midfielder in front of a solid back four. Ahead of Velicky, the coach uses either a four-man midfield with Zbynech Pospech as a lone striker or a three and two. Playmaker Kozak is the linchpin to either. Speedy sub Pedro Anderson is often brought on to torment tired legs.

## ATLETICO MADRID (SPA)

# Boost at the back

**With no problems up front, coach Aguirre has focused on giving the squad real depth defensively**

Striking again...Forlan

LAST SEASON, Atletico proved they could do well without Fernando Torres, as the players brought in with the money generated by his sale to Liverpool helped the club up to fourth in La Liga. This summer, there were more major changes as the club prepared for their first Champions League campaign since 1996.

The new arrivals look as if they will fit in seamlessly. French international goalkeeper Gregory Coupet has replaced Christian Abbiati; Dutchman John Heitinga and Czech Tomas Ujfalusi have taken over from Luis Amaranto Perea and Pablo Ibanez in central defence; and Brazilian Paulo Assuncao should feature in defensive midfield.

The signings mean coach Javier Aguirre has done much to strengthen the squad's defensive base and have given Atletico a realistic chance of competing effectively on both domestic and European fronts.

In attack, it's as you were, with Argentinian Maxi Rodriguez and Portuguese Simao on the flanks, and Raul Garcia behind the main forwards, Uruguayan Diego Forlan and mercurial Argentinian Sergio Aguero.

Aguirre faces a potential problem with Portuguese midfielder Maniche, who is back from a loan spell at Internazionale. He has never lived up to the potential he showed at Euro 2004.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**JAVIER AGUIRRE**
The former Mexico coach has brought much-needed consistency to Atletico.

**THE PLAYER**
**SERGIO AGUERO**
The Argentinian starlet was Atletico's outstanding player last season. The continued success of his strike partnership with Forlan will be crucial to the club's progress.

### GREEN LIGHT FOR DIAMOND

Atletico will again play a 4-4-2, with a midfield diamond comprising Raul Garcia at the point, wide men Rodriguez and Simao, and Paulo Assuncao in the holding role, for which he faces competition from youngster Ignacio Camacho. Luis Garcia and new signing Florent Sinama-Pongolle are options up front.

## BARCELONA (SPA)

# Nou broom

**Coach Guardiola has made his mark as some of Barca's big names depart**

Gunning...ex-Arsenal Henry and Hleb

THE BARCELONA revolution is in full swing as new coach Pep Guardiola, the successor to Frank Rijkaard, rings the changes. There could also be changes in the boardroom at Camp Nou, with president Joan Laporta under huge pressure to stand down. This would trigger an election, for which rival director Sandro Rosell would be a leading candidate.

Laporta faced a barrage of criticism for Barca's poor performance last season, and his response was to initiate a clearout, dispensing with Rijkaard and putting three high-profile players – Ronaldinho, Deco and Samuel Eto'o – up for sale. Eto'o has not moved on – no club was willing to meet his hefty salary demands – but Ronaldinho went to Milan and Deco to Chelsea.

The new arrivals are flying full-back Daniel Alves, Martin Caceres, a Sergio Ramos-type figure in central defence, midfielder Alexander Hleb and midfielder Seydou Keita. Guardiola would also like to sign a striker with presence – hence the interest in Didier Drogba and Emmanuel Adebayor. Barca were also keen on David Silva from Valencia.

One tactical change is that Thierry Henry, a former Arsenal team-mate of Hleb, will move to a central role up front. The switch should help the Frenchman improve on a disappointing first season in Spain.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**PEP GUARDIOLA**
The former Barca captain, a member of the "dream team" of the early 1990s, faces a huge test of character in his first major coaching role.

**THE PLAYER**
**LIONEL MESSI**
Now the club's undisputed star following Ronaldinho's departure. The Argentinian is the best player in the world when fit – he suffers more than his fair share of injuries.

### INIESTA MOVES UP, HENRY GOES CENTRAL

Barca will still line up in a 4-3-3 – the main changes from last season will be the use of two holding midfielders and moving Henry to a central role up front. Midfielder Andres Iniesta will play a more attacking role, while Xavi will have a less restricted remit. Hleb is an alternative for the left-sided attacking berth.

## BASLE (SWI)

# Reaching out

**Switzerland's richest club have big European ambitions but there are problems in the squad**

New forward...Rubio

AS THE BEST-ORGANISED and financially-strongest club in Switzerland, Basle are always ambitious when it comes to European competition. The club motto of "reach for the stars" is very apt. They would dearly love to reach the Champions League group phase for the first time since the glorious 2002-03 season, when they beat Liverpool and Juventus to progress to the now-defunct second group stage. If they fail to make it to the last 32 this time, the target would be the knockout phase of the UEFA Cup, something they have achieved in three out of the past four seasons.

Basle have lost two of their most significant players – Swedish centre-back Daniel Majstorovic to AEK Athens and Japanese full-back Koji Nakata to Kashima Antlers – since winning the domestic league in spring. To compensate, they have signed Argentinian stopper David Abraham (Gimnastic Tarragona) – an Under-20 World Cup winner – Swedish full-back Behrang Safari (Malmo) and Chilean attacker Eduardo Rubio (Cruz Azul).

The biggest problem for coach Christian Gross is keeping everyone in his large squad happy. He has two or three decent players for every position and the competition is intense. Also, Gross' uncompromising manner can create problems that tend to fester. He has already had to discipline some of his players.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**CHRISTIAN GROSS**
Now in his 10th season in charge and showing no sign of losing his appetite for the job.

**THE PLAYER**
**FRANCO COSTANZO**
The Argentinian is rated the best keeper in the Swiss League. He took over as captain from Ivan Ergic this summer.

### STRELLER FIT FOR PURPOSE?

Much hangs on the fitness of injury-prone striker Marco Streller. If he's available, Basle should use a forceful, attacking 4-1-3-2, with young Eren Derdiyok as strike partner. If not, Derdiyok will lead the line alone in a 4-2-3-1 or 4-1-4-1. Most attacks are channelled through Serb midfielder Ergic.

## BATE BORISOV (BLS)

# Running smoothly

**The team are dominant in Belarus and have European ambitions**

Crunch tie...Sosnovsky v Anderlecht

BATE, ESTABLISHED in 1973, are the most successful and professionally-run club in Belarus. They are on course for a third successive domestic league title and made it through to the Champions League third qualifying round with a surprise defeat of Anderlecht.

The team's strong points are their fitness and tactical nous. BATE also benefit from an excellent academy, one of the best in the country. The young talents it produces are much-needed since the club regularly sell their top players to Russian clubs, who are much wealthier than their Belorussian counterparts.

Among the latest departees are defender Yegor Filipenko (Spartak Moscow) and forward Artem Radkov (Khimki). BATE responded this time by buying in players: three defenders – Vladimir Rzhevsky (YBK Pietarsaari of Finland), Sergey Sosnovsky (Neman) and Alexander Yurevich (Karpaty Lviv of Ukraine) – and a new keeper, Sergey Veremko (Neman).

BATE, from the provincial town of Borisov, faced Bulgarian league runners-up Levski Sofia in the third qualifying round. Ambitious coach Viktor Goncharenko was confident that his blend of young and experienced players could make history by reaching the group stage.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**VIKTOR GONCHARENKO**
The 31-year-old took the reins in November 2007 after two seasons in charge of the reserves. Renowned for keeping his half-time talks to a minimum. His distinguished playing career was ended prematurely by injury.

**THE PLAYER**
**DMITRY LIKHTAROVICH**
A holding midfielder who has made the Belorussian team of the season many times.

### NEKHAICHIK SUPPORTS RODIONOV

Goncharenko usually uses a 4-4-2 but may opt for a more defensive 4-5-1. Midfielder Pavel Nekhaichik has the responsibility to support main striker Vitaliy Rodionov, as does the prolific Gennadiy Bliznyuk, who can play alongside Rodionov or just off him.

## BAYERN MUNICH (GER)

# Mr Motivator

**New coach Klinsmann should be a persuasive force as Bayern aim for the last eight**

Quality comment...Toni

THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE campaign will be the acid test for new Bayern boss Jurgen Klinsmann, the successor to Ottmar Hitzfeld. Failure to qualify for last season's edition following only a fourth-place finish in the Bundesliga was a major blow to Bavarian self-esteem, a wake-up call if ever there was one, and on their return to the continental mainstream, they will be aiming to make the quarter-finals at the very least. It is a reasonable goal. Since winning the competition in 2001, the furthest they have gone is the quarter-finals, in 2002 and 2005.

Keeping expectations in check seems sensible. Leading the dance in the Bundesliga is one thing, the Champions League is quite another. Anyone who saw Bayern blown away 4-0 by eventual winners Zenit St Petersburg in the UEFA Cup semi-final second leg last spring would agree with the recent suggestion from star striker Luca Toni that two or three top-quality signings were needed this summer to make the team competitive in Europe. Unfortunately for Bayern, attempts to bring in Milan ball-winner Gennaro Gattuso and Arsenal creator Alexander Hleb came to nought.

Now much hinges on Klinsmann's renowned powers of motivation and his ability to deliver on the promise to improve every player in the squad.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**JURGEN KLINSMANN**
After leading Germany to third place at the 2006 World Cup, the former international striker embarks on his first spell in charge of a professional club.

**THE PLAYER**
**FRANCK RIBERY**
Everyone at Bayern will be praying the excellent ball-playing midfielder comes back as good as new following an operation on damaged ankle ligaments.

### ATTACK-MINDED, HIGH TEMPO

Klinsmann remains wedded to the attack-minded, high-tempo 4-4-2 he employed as Germany coach. The key men are the two creative wide midfielders, whose brief is to supply front men Toni and Miroslav Klose. The back four will be told to keep a high line. Lucio should have more freedom to go forward than previously.

## BORDEAUX (FRA)

# Blanc page

**The coach has the chance to show what he can do in his first European campaign in charge**

Super Cup sweep...keeper Rame and co

LAURENT BLANC'S first season in charge of *Les Girondins* was a major success. The west coast club gave champions Lyon a decent run for their money in the League, finally admitting defeat only on the very last day of the season.

The coach's reward for his endeavours was a Champions League place and a chance to show those at football's top table what he can do at the helm.

It's going to be tough for Bordeaux, though. They're a well-organised and disciplined side, but have little individual flair and a lack of genuine talent that will almost inevitably be exposed in Europe's top club competition.

Lyon beat Bordeaux comfortably both times they met in the League last term, scoring a total of seven goals, which gives some idea of their relative strengths. That said, *Les Girondins* beat Lyon on penalties after a 0-0 draw in the recent Super Cup.

Bordeaux have brought in playmaker Yoann Gourcuff on a season-long loan from Milan and Caen marksman Yoan Gouffran, but the club's best deal could well prove to be getting midfielder Wendel to extend his contract until 2012. The Brazilian's explosive left-foot shots brought a bumper haul of 12 league goals last campaign to supplement the 15 from Argentinian striker Fernando Cavenaghi. Just don't expect any Champions League miracles.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**LAURENT BLANC**
Considered a risk when appointed a year ago because of his lack of experience. But he's proved more than capable and exudes quiet authority.

**THE PLAYER**
**YOANN GOURCUFF**
The playmaker has plenty to prove during his season-long loan from Milan. The son of Lorient coach Christian Gourcuff.

### DIARRA MOPS UP

Last season Blanc liked to play with a holding midfielder, a creative linchpin and an attack-minded midfielder in the hole. Alou Diarra is a player in the Makelele mould to mop up in front of the defence. Gourcuff has replaced Johan Micoud as playmaker, and Gabriel Obertan could get the nod for the hole role.

## BRANN (NOR)

# On the slide

**The Bergen side have struggled since ending their long wait for a league title**

Out of form...Solli (right)

BRANN WERE CROWNED league champions last year, bringing to an end a 44-year wait for Norway's top prize. However, their hopes of repeating the achievement have fallen away for a number of reasons.

Captain Martin Andresen left for Valerenga after a three-year spell in Bergen, the team have been depleted by a number of long-term injuries and several key players have been out of form. Midfielders Petter Vaagan Moen and Jan Gunnar Solli have been far from their best, and goalkeeper Hakan Opdal, who was outstanding last season, has made several blunders this term.

Brann were only sixth in the League after 16 rounds, 11 points behind leaders Stabaek. And there was humiliation in the Cup, an 8-0 hammering by Molde. What's more, Mons Ivar Mjelde's side only just squeezed through to the Champions League third qualifying round with an away goals defeat of modest Ventspils of Latvia.

The problems have continued to arrive for Mjelde. Leading striker Thorstein Helstad has just left for Le Mans, and the team's lack of firepower has been evident. New forward Njogu Demba-Nyren has settled in well but is not a prolific scorer.

Sceptics doubt whether Brann can turn the corner, and few are expecting them to go far in Europe.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**MONS IVAR MJELDE**
The local boss has been in charge since 2003 and was hailed as a hero last season following the championship triumph. Formerly an international striker.

**THE PLAYER**
**EIRIK BAKKE**
The former Leeds and Aston Villa midfielder has suffered a number of long-term injuries but is back and appears to be relishing his new role as captain.

### KARADAS GOES FORWARD

Brann normally play 4-4-2 but inconsistent form has prompted the use of 4-5-1. The team try to play quick-passing football with the aim of mounting attacks as rapidly as possible. Azar Karadas has been moved from defence to an attacking role. Defenders Kristjan Sigurdsson and Olafur Bjarnarson are a threat at set-pieces.

## CELTIC (SCO)

# Progress report

**The Parkhead side have done well in Europe recently while also holding sway in Scotland**

Permanent fixture...Samaras

CELTIC HAVE re-established themselves as the dominant force in Scottish football under Gordon Strachan, who took charge in 2005. Last season the Parkhead side made it three league titles in a row and put in another impressive showing in the Champions League, reaching the knockout phase, when they lost to Barcelona in the last 16.

Yet despite the progress in Europe, which was underpinned by fierce home support, Strachan was under pressure for much of last season. Celtic snatched the league title from Rangers only on the last day of the season, and the manager has yet to win over sections of the Parkhead crowd.

Summer transfer activity has been limited to tying Greek striker Georgios Samaras to a permanent deal after his loan spell from Manchester City and the low-key signing of Paddy McCourt from Derry City. The high wages of several older players such as Bobo Balde and Thomas Gravesen, neither of whom can be persuaded to move on, have restricted the amount Celtic can spend on bringing in new players.

However, two important deals were done with existing players. Aiden McGeady, last season's Scottish player of the year, and Australian international forward Scott McDonald both agreed new five-year deals.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE MANAGER**
**GORDON STRACHAN**
The most successful Celtic manager since Jock Stein and popular with the media since he's always good for a quote.

**THE PLAYER**
**AIDEN McGEADY**
The Glasgow-born Irish international midfielder is a bundle of tricks. He deservedly picked up a raft of awards for his performances last season.

### COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR

Celtic look likely to play in a 4-3-3 in Europe, with McGeady and Samaras flanking centre-forward Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink. The team's collective endeavour and indomitable spirit at home have allowed them to punch above their weight. They rely heavily on McGeady and Shunsuke Nakamura for creativity.

## CFR CLUJ (ROM)

# Order of merit

**The provincial side have risen rapidly and loosened the grip on power of the Bucharest big three**

Riding his luck...Andone

CFR CLUJ HAVE made astonishing progress in the past five years, rising from the regional third division to win the Romanian League this spring and gain direct entry to the Champions League group stage. And according to executive president Iuliu Muresan, their achievements are not over yet: "CFR Cluj will get more points than [league rivals] Steaua Bucharest managed in their last Champions League group participation."

The comment underlines how the provincial club have effectively declared war on the big capital city sides – Steaua, Dinamo and Rapid – who have dominated the local scene for so many years.

CFR's progress can, in large part, be ascribed to a number of foreign signings, from Portugal, Argentina, Sweden and Brazil. This season, the return from long-term injury of Brazilian striker Didi has boosted the chances of the team being even more effective going forward than last term, when CFR also won the Romanian Cup.

The lack of experience of European competition is the greatest handicap for the cosmopolitan group. That was underlined last season when CFR lost to Anorthosis of Cyprus in the UEFA Cup second qualifying round. Coach Ioan Andone says: "We are determined, but we need some luck because the odds will be against us."

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**IOAN ANDONE**
A former Romanian international defender, including appearances at the 1990 World Cup. He has all the qualities to be a top coach.

**THE PLAYER**
**EUGEN TRICA**
A very skilful playmaker but also a genuine all-rounder in midfield.

### KONE'S ROLE: TO BREAK DOWN DEFENCES

CFR are capable of scoring from all areas – right-back Tony hit five league goals last term, midfielder Trica got nine – but European competition will be much tougher. Last season's star forward Antonio Semedo has lost his place to Yssouf Kone; Andone believes the Ivorian will be better at breaking down defences in Europe.

## CHELSEA (ENG)

# Speed trap

**New manager Scolari does not have long to adapt to managing a European club**

New contract...Lampard

THE REACTION OF Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich to losing the Champions League Final in Moscow was inevitable. Israeli manager Avram Grant was sacked and the call went out to Brazilian Luiz Felipe Scolari.

Summer transfer activity was relatively modest. The main arrivals were Deco and Jose Bosingwa, two of Scolari's Portugal players at Euro 2008, while Frank Lampard signed a new contract after speculation he would join Internazionale. There was the possibility of Robinho joining from Real Madrid and there was silly-season speculation about a world-record bid for Kaka from Milan. But the reality is that Scolari already has a world-class squad, one that got to within a penalty kick of winning the Champions League and also pushed Manchester United to the wire in the Premier League.

Scolari has not coached a European club before but has had success in continental competition, winning the Libertadores Cup, South America's top prize, with both Gremio and Palmeiras. And during his national team spells, with Brazil and Portugal, his quasi-religious nationalism struck a chord with the players. But how will he cope with the conflicting demands within Chelsea's multi-millionaire squad?

Abramovich, after spending £500million, will not want to wait too long before he gets an answer.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE MANAGER**
**LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI**
The Brazilian has taken his first club job in Europe following seven years as a national coach, with Brazil and then Portugal. The question is, how will he adapt?

**THE PLAYER**
**DECO**
The Brazil-born midfield schemer is eyeing a hat-trick of Champions League triumphs following success with Porto in 2004 and Barcelona in 2006.

### PLAYING ESSIEN DEEP IS FORWARD THINKING

It's hard to predict how Chelsea will play under Scolari, who has always adapted his teams to fit their surroundings. Nicolas Anelka could start alone up front in the absence of the injured Didier Drogba. Playing Michael Essien (or John Obi Mikel) in defensive midfield would allow Scolari to field four more attack-minded midfielders.

## DINAMO ZAGREB (CRO)

# Dose of the Blues

**Best player Luka Modric has departed, and the fans are furious about the signing of a hate figure**

Persona non grata...Hrgovic (top)

DINAMO ARE WEAKER than last season, when they won the Croatian league and cup Double, for the simple reason that Luka Modric has left for Tottenham. The 22-year-old is Croatia's best player and practically irreplaceable as Dinamo's "director", the figure who makes the team tick.

But the Blues have an even bigger off-field problem in that the supporters are effectively at war with the management about how the club is run.

The latest clash happened after the signing this summer of defender Mirko Hrgovic from JEF United of Japan. Hrgovic is the former captain of Dinamo's arch-rivals, Hajduk Split, and was once even involved in a fight with a Dinamo supporter.

The Bad Blue Boys, Dinamo's hard-core supporters' group, have staged numerous incidents in protest at the signing, including the hanging of a doll bearing Hrgovic's name at the stadium.

Paradoxically, Hrgovic was Dinamo's biggest and best signing during the summer transfer window. The other important arrivals are international goalkeeper Tomislav Butina (to replace German Georg Koch) and three South Americans – Chilean playmaker Pedro Morales, the prospective replacement for Modric, and Argentinians Luis Ibanez, a defender, and midfielder Guillermo Suarez.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**BRANKO IVANKOVIC**
An excellent tactician with fine attention to detail who is also very good at developing players.

**THE PLAYER**
**MARIO MANDZUKIC**
The confident forward is a great finisher and looks set to become a big European star.

### STRONG DEFENCE WITH DOUBLE PROTECTION

Ivankovic will use his favoured 4-2-3-1. The defence, comprising very experienced individuals, is a really strong department, and is protected by two defensive midfielders – Cameroonian Mathias Chago and Ivica Vrdoljak. Morales has the tough task of trying to replace "director" Modric.

## DYNAMO KYIV (UKR)

# Faded force

**The squad is depleted, there's strife in the dressing room and the club have big debts**

Sell-off...Semin

DYNAMO, THE former perennial Ukrainian champions, lost out to arch-rivals Shakhtar Donetsk in both League and Cup last season and suffered the humiliation of losing all six group games in the Champions League.

Many fans expected owner Ihor Surkis to spend big this summer to try to turn the club's fortunes around, but there were only three notable arrivals, while coach Yuri Semin sold off a number of first-teamers and also allowed talented young academy graduates to go on loan to other Ukrainian clubs.

Defender Goran Sablic arrived back from a loan spell at Hajduk Split, battling holding midfielder Ognjen Vukojevic was signed from Dinamo Zagreb and Brazilian right-back Betao joined from Santos. The departees included Serbs Marjan Markovic and Goran Gavrancic, and Brazilians Diogo Rincon, Michel and Kleber.

Semin is also without two on-field leaders – Oleh Husiev and Brazilian Carlos Correa – until October because of injury.

The club have off-pitch problems, too. There was a bad atmosphere in the dressing room last term because of rivalry between the nationalities. There are also financial problems – Dynamo are £5million in debt and are hardly likely to claw that back from ticket sales. The average home gate last season was barely 7,000 and only 5,000 turned up for the first home game this term.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**YURI SEMIN**
The former Russia coach has caused the fans consternation by loaning out talented academy graduates to smaller clubs and relying on foreigners even more than his predecessor.

**THE PLAYER**
**OGNJEN VUKOJEVIC**
The Croatian midfield marshal is the new heart of the team.

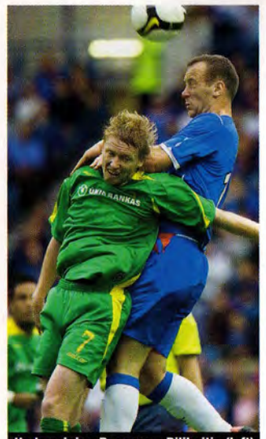
### LAST-CHANCE SALOON FOR MILEVSKYI

Semin likes 4-4-2. Taras Mikhalik is irreplaceable in the heart of defence, Nigerian Ayila Yussuf patrols the middle of the pitch alongside Vukojevic, and Serb Milos Ninkovic gives attacking thrust up the left. Striker Artem Milevskyi, once named heir to Andrii Shevchenko, probably has his last chance to fulfil his potential.

## FBK KAUNAS (LIT)

# Best of results

**The Lithuanian club are used to winning their domestic league but beating Rangers was something else**


Undermining Rangers...Pilibaitis (left)

THE DEFEAT OF Rangers in the Champions League second qualifying round was the greatest result in the history of FBK Kaunas.

The club, backed by Russia-born businessman Vladimir Romanov, have dominated the Lithuanian League in recent years, winning eight of the last nine titles. The recent successes have come despite losing their best players, on an annual basis, to Hearts, who are owned by Romanov.

Players such as Edgaras Jankauskas, Bruno Aguiar, Andrius Velicka, Nerijus Barasa, Marius Zaliukas and Roman Bednar have all made the journey from Kaunas, Lithuania's second city, to Edinburgh. The latest to make the journey, Slovakian goalkeeper Marian Kello, did so after playing in the first leg of the third qualifying round tie against AaB Aalborg.

However, defender Tomas Kancelskis is back at Kaunas after a loan period at Hearts did not work out.

Kaunas have a number of Lithuanian internationals in their ranks, including striker Mindaugas Grigalevicius and midfielder Linas Pilibaitis, as well as several other nationalities, including Argentinian goalkeeper Esteban Dreer, Polish midfielder Adrian Mrowiec, Senegalese midfielder Pascal Mendy and Brazilian playmaker Rafael Ledesma.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**JOSE COUCEIRO**

The Portuguese, former Porto boss was brought in after Belorussian Andrei Zygmantovich was demoted before the Champions League tie against Rangers because he did not have the requisite coaching licence.

**THE PLAYER**
**RAFAEL LEDESMA**

The Brazilian playmaker caused Rangers all sorts of problems.

### CAPTAIN RADZIUS CAN PLAY ALL OVER

Kaunas usually line up in a 3-5-2 in the domestic league but tend to play 4-5-1 in Europe, with playmaker Ledesma behind striker Grigalevicius. Mendy and Mrowiec perform defensive duties in midfield. Captain Nerijus Radzius can play in midfield, central defence or at right-back.

## FENERBAHCE (TUR)

# Even further?

**Fener reached the quarter-finals last time round but that is not the extent of their ambitions**

Potent brew...Kazim

THERE IS NO chance of Fenerbahce supporters regarding the team's run to the Champions League quarter-finals last season as a one-off. It was the club's best performance in the competition but with Spain's Euro 2008-winning boss Luis Aragones replacing Brazilian Zico, the consensus on the Asiatic side of Istanbul is that the Canaries can go a step or two further this time.

That may seem sheer bravado to neutrals, but Aragones has not made any attempt to dampen expectations. "This is a first-class club, comparable to a Real or Barca," said the 69-year-old. "We can celebrate great results here."

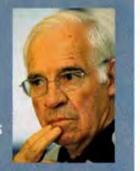
But the first matter at hand was to actually reach the group stage: Fener faced Partizan Belgrade in the third qualifying round.

Although Brazilian forward Deivid will be out until the new year with a broken ankle, Fenerbahce still have a surfeit of attacking potency in the shape of strikers Semih Senturk and Spain's Daniel Guiza – a summer signing from Mallorca – wide men Kazim Kazim and Ugur Boral, creators Alex and new boy Emre Belozoglu, and adventurous full-backs Gokhan Gonul and Roberto Carlos.

However, at the back they are as unpredictable as keeper Volkan Demirel and will surely miss the effective sweeping up in front of the back four of Mehmet Aurelio, who has joined Real Betis.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**LUIS ARAGONES**



The Spanish veteran was persuaded to work outside his homeland for the first time by a salary six times what he earned as Spain coach and a fresh challenge in a football hot-bed.

**THE PLAYER**
**SEMIH SENTURK**

Three goals at Euro 2008 catapulted this outstanding goalpoacher into the spotlight. Now he must confirm his new-found reputation.

### PENETRATION UP THE LEFT FLANK

Aragones is using a 4-3-1-2, with the emphasis on neat, short passes and keeping possession. Penetration in wide areas is crucial to his plan, with the left flank – the habitat of Roberto Carlos and Ugur or Emre – the favoured avenue. Playmaker Alex often plays as a third forward. Selcuk Sahin does the midfield donkey work.

## FIORENTINA (ITA)

# Rising from ruin

**The *Viola* are back in the big time after bankruptcy, a spell in Serie C2 and a match-fixing scandal**

On a promise...Gilardino

THIS IS A big season for the *Viola* as they embark on their first Champions League campaign since their return from bankruptcy in 2002.

Under owner Diego Della Valle and coach Cesare Prandelli, Fiorentina have risen from Serie C2 to Serie A and now Europe's top club competition. They finished sixth in the top flight in 2006-07 to book a UEFA Cup berth despite having had 15 points docked for their part in the *Calciopoli* match-fixing scandal. Last season, they maintained their momentum, finishing fourth, despite the sale of leading striker Luca Toni to Bayern Munich.

This summer, forward Alberto Gilardino has arrived from Milan, having never lived up to the promise he showed during a prolific season at Parma in 2004-05. Prandelli was his coach then and he clearly believes he can get Gilardino performing again.

Other new arrivals likely to command a first-team place include Brazilian holding midfielder Felipe Melo, Peruvian defender Juan Manuel Vargas and the precociously talented Montenegrin teenager Stevan Jovetic (see Talent Scout, page 94).

Fiorentina were of course eyeing the Champions League group stage but first had to overcome Slavia Prague in the third qualifying round.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**CESARE PRANDELLI**

The former Juventus midfielder steered Fiorentina to fourth place in Serie A after the death of his wife from cancer in November.

**THE PLAYER**
**ADRIAN MUTU**

The club's top scorer last season has stayed on despite interest from Roma.

### WILL MUTU AND GILARDINO GEL?

Much will depend on whether the new strike partnership of Mutu and Gilardino can gel. There is also a big responsibility on new signing Jovetic to adequately supply them. Argentinian Pablo Osvaldo and Giampaolo Pazzini are other striking options. Felipe Melo will be an important influence in defensive midfield.

## GALATASARAY (TUR)

# Bom boom

**The Turkish champions' tails are up as they enter the post-Hakan Sukur era**

Feeling champion...Galatasaray

AN ERA ENDED recently at the Turkish champions when long-serving striker and national institution Hakan Sukur finally decided to call time on a glorious career. But the passing of a legend has not diminished hopes in these parts that the *Cim Bom* can make the Champions League knockout phase – assuming they have, first of all, reached the group stage by overcoming Steaua Bucharest in the third qualifying round.

Such optimism about Galatasaray's prospects is not unjustified. The club contributed no fewer than seven players to the Turkish squad that reached the Euro 2008 semi-finals, they have a well-respected new coach, German Michael Skibbe, and the team have been strengthened with the signing of Stuttgart's Portuguese centre-back Fernando Meira and Italian keeper Morgan De Sanctis (on loan from Sevilla).

However, the recruitment of oft-injured Australian winger Harry Kewell is a gamble. Other potential problems could be the pelvic condition of Swedish defensive midfielder Tobias Linderoth, the volatility of Brazilian midfield general Lincoln and the fact that strikers Umit Karan and Shabani Nonda are probably past their best. Reported targets to replace the latter two – Ricardo Oliveira (Zaragoza), Javier Saviola (Real Madrid) and Hernan Crespo (Internazionale) – would be just what the doctor ordered.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**MICHAEL SKIBBE**

The former Leverkusen and Dortmund boss has taken over this summer from another German, Kalli Feldkamp. Skibbe was previously assistant to Germany coach Rudi Voller.

**THE PLAYER**
**FERNANDO MEIRA**

The classy Portuguese international centre-back had few peers in the Bundesliga over the past five years. It was a real coup for Galatasaray to sign him.

### HIGH TEMPO, PRECISE BUILD-UP

Skibbe is likely to use a 4-2-3-1 as at Leverkusen. Despite playing with only one forward, it is not a negative system. The three attacking midfielders and the full-backs are told to push forward whenever they can. Skibbe wants to put the opposition under pressure from the off and demands a high tempo and precise build-up.

## INTERNAZIONALE (ITA)

# Just win it, Jose!

**Coach Mourinho is under pressure to deliver the trophy Inter have not lifted for 43 years**

Big signing...Muntari

JOSE MOURINHO is enjoying a honeymoon period as coach of Internazionale, but there are more questions than answers about his squad. In pre-season friendlies, the Portuguese experimented with a number of formations and different personnel, particularly in midfield.

He initially said he wanted to trim his squad but his failure to do that may actually work in his favour; Inter are short in defence, with Marco Materazzi injured and Ivan Cordoba and Walter Samuel lacking fitness.

Brazilian winger Mancini (Roma) and Ghanaian midfielder Sulley Muntari (Portsmouth) were the big new signings. Mourinho was also angling after Frank Lampard, but he has now committed himself to Chelsea. Besides, there hardly seems to be any room for more midfielders given that the reserves include Patrick Vieira, Luis Figo, Olivier Dacourt and Dejan Stankovic.

There are plenty of options in attack, too, with Adriano back from Brazil and vying with Julio Cruz, David Suazo, Mario Balotelli and Hernan Crespo.

Mourinho faced criticism at Chelsea for negative tactics; he's unlikely to find such a hostile attitude in Italy, but the weight of expectation may be overwhelming. Mourinho has been hired to deliver the European Cup, which Inter have not won for 43 years. No pressure, Jose.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**JOSE MOURINHO**
The Portuguese faces the biggest challenge of his career – to guide Inter to triumph in the Champions League, to end their 43-year search for Europe's top club trophy.

**THE PLAYER**
**ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC**
The Swedish forward is the brains of the attack.

### TWO HOLDING, TWO OUT WIDE?

The Italian media has speculated that Mourinho will play a 4-3-3, which he favoured at Chelsea. But, in fact, he could easily go with a 4-2-3-1, with Javier Zanetti and Esteban Cambiasso as the two defensive midfielders and Muntari and Mancini out wide. Ibrahimovic will play off a centre-forward, possibly Adriano.

## JUVENTUS (ITA)

# Test of quality

**There are a lot of new faces at Juve but are they good enough?**

Adding bite...Poulsen (right)

THE OLD LADY is back in the Champions League after a two-season enforced absence following the *Calciopoli* match-fixing scandal. Juve were demoted to Serie B in 2006 having finished top of the Serie A standings, and after bouncing back to the top flight in 2007, they finished third last term.

A few famous faces remain from the pre-scandal days, such as Alessandro Del Piero, Pavel Nedved and Gianluigi Buffon. But there have also been a whole host of new arrivals in Turin. In short, Juventus have the quantity but do they have enough quality?

Brazil-born striker Amauri was the big catch of the summer, from Palermo, while Christian Poulsen joined from Sevilla to add bite to midfield. Sebastian Giovinco, the little midfielder back from a loan spell at Empoli, is a player worth keeping an eye on; he's just 1.65m (5ft 5in) tall but a bundle of creativity.

The signing of Swedish defender Olof Mellberg, on a free from Aston Villa, could be important because Jorge Andrade has suffered a further knee injury setback.

The good form of forward Vincenzo Iaquinta in pre-season has made the club have second thoughts about offloading him, so coach Claudio Ranieri must find a strike partnership from two of the following four: Del Piero, Iaquinta, Amauri and David Trezeguet.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**CLAUDIO RANIERI**
The former Chelsea and Valencia boss has turned Juventus into a highly competitive outfit, steering them to third place last season on their return to Serie A.

**THE PLAYER**
**PAVEL NEDVED**
The ex-Czech international is getting on in years but Juve will still be looking to him to provide much-needed creativity in an otherwise workmanlike midfield.

### COMPETITIVE EDGE

Ranieri's Juve are ultra-competitive, with lots of pressing, a high defensive line and use of an offside trap. Centre-back Giorgio Chiellini was a surprise hit at Euro 2008, and new signing Mellberg is a useful reserve. Cristiano Zanetti and Poulsen provide the competitive edge in midfield, while Giovinco is a more creative option.

## LEVSKI SOFIA (BUL)

# Gain and pain

**Levski won a surprise ticket to Europe's top event but have crashed badly in the past two seasons**

Friendly rivalry...Levski v Werder

LEVSKI WERE GLEEFUL at taking the Champions League place of city rivals CSKA, who were barred because of large debts. But the Bulgarian league runners-up have made a terrible start to the new season, resulting in the resignation of coach Velislav Vutsov.

Levski also have painful memories of their last two appearances in the Champions League. In 2006 they lost all six matches in the group stage, conceding 17 goals and scoring only one. Last season they lost home and away to minnows Tampere United of Finland in the second qualifying round.

There are some problems in the squad. Croatian centre-back Igor Tomasic, now at Maccabi Tel Aviv, will be a hard act for Czech replacement David Bystron (from Banik Ostrava) to follow.

Midfield options have been reduced now that veteran Daniel Borimirov has hung up his boots to become the club's sporting director. Georgi Sarmov is a long-term injury casualty, and his replacement, Brazilian Joaozinho, has not fully convinced.

Forward Georgi Ivanov has signed up from Rijeka of Croatia for his fourth spell at Levski. Vutsov had hoped to pair him with Georgi Hristov, but the move from Botev Plovdiv hit a snag.

Levski are an ambitious club but the reality is that the squad is not ready for the rigours of the Champions League.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**EMIL VELEV**
Assistant coach who has stepped into the breach since Vutsov quit.

**THE PLAYER**
**GEORGI IVANOV**
The striker is Levski's most experienced player and an iconic figure for the fans because of his decisive goals.

### IVANOV AND GADZHEV HOLD SWAY

Levski will probably play 4-4-2. Miroslav Ivanov and Vladimir Gadzhev are the key figures in midfield. In attack Georgi Ivanov will be partnered by Nikolay Dimitrov. An alternative is 4-3-3, with Miroslav Ivanov dropping out and one of Jean Carlos, Ze Soares and Enyo Krastovchev joining the attack.

## LIVERPOOL (ENG)

# Rafa rides again

**The tactics of manager Benitez have brought Liverpool much joy in Europe**

Starting out...Keane

ONCE AGAIN, winning the league title is Liverpool's priority as they look to end their 18-year drought. And the desire to get their hands on the championship is even more intense since arch-rivals Manchester United are now just one short of Liverpool's record 18 titles. But, just as in recent seasons, the Anfield club seem more suited to success in European competition. Apart from anything else, the tactics of manager Rafa Benitez have proved very effective in the Champions League over the past few years.

This summer's signings have strengthened the squad, though not dramatically. Irish forward Robbie Keane and Swiss right-back Philipp Degen will expect places in the starting line-up, assuming Benitez has dropped his obsession with rotating the squad at every opportunity.

Of the departees, left-back or left midfielder John Arne Riise, scorer of that own goal against Chelsea in last season's semi-final, and injury-prone wide man Harry Kewell will not be missed. But Peter Crouch gave Liverpool extra attacking options, and Benitez may rue the sale to Portsmouth, forced by financial concerns. Nevertheless, if Keane can establish a rapport with the free-scoring Fernando Torres, and if a lid is kept on the boardroom dispute between the club's American co-owners, anything is possible.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE MANAGER**
**RAFA BENITEZ**
The Spaniard's uneasy relationship with Liverpool's American co-owners was exposed last season, but he continues to enjoy the support of most fans.

**THE PLAYER**
**STEVEN GERRARD**
The captain's irrepressible drive and goals have been crucial to the club's success in the Champions League.

### WHERE SHOULD GERRARD PLAY?

The big question is where to play Gerrard. Benitez feels he is more effective on the right of a four-man midfield, with Javier Mascherano holding and Lucas Leiva or Xabi Alonso (or Gareth Barry if signed) in the centre. But Gerrard prefers a central position from which he can attack, with Dirk Kuijt and Ryan Babel out wide.

## LYON (FRA)

# Stage show

**New coach Puel knows president Aulas expects a quarter-finals place at least**

Leading the line...Benzema

LYON HEAD INTO the Champions League after winning a seventh straight French championship title but with the same question hanging over them as in previous seasons: can they turn domestic dominance into European triumph?

Last season's Champions League showing was Lyon's worst of recent years. They were beaten by Manchester United in the last 16 – thus failing to meet the minimum quarter-finals requirement of president Jean-Michel Aulas – and the manner of their defeat was much more comprehensive than the 2-1 aggregate scoreline suggested.

Coach Alain Perrin paid the price, and his replacement, Claude Puel, a wily European campaigner with Lille, knows Aulas will be looking for much better things.

Puel has reshaped the squad over the summer. New signings include giant Ghanaian central defender John Mensah, bought from Rennes to replace Sebastien Squillaci (Sevilla); highly-rated Cameroonian midfielder Jean Makoun (Lille); and young keeper Hugo Lloris (Nice), to replace Gregory Coupet (Atletico Madrid).

The other high-profile departee was talented but erratic Hatem Ben Arfa (Marseille), but overall Lyon should be stronger than last term.

Expect Puel's side to make the quarters at least and perhaps take a big scalp in the knockout stages.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**CLAUDE PUEL**
The highly-respected 46-year-old arrives after six good seasons at Lille. Puel is hard but fair and has a reputation as a deep football thinker. A former Monaco player.

**THE PLAYER**
**EDERSON**
He's not a household name – yet – but the Brazilian midfielder, recruited to succeed the fading Juninho Pernambucano, is a class act.

### BENZEMA: ALONE OR IN TANDEM?

Puel has an embarrassment of riches in midfield. His biggest decision is whether to go 4-2-3-1 or 4-4-2, to use Karim Benzema as a lone striker or partner him with Fred, Milan Baros or even Sidney Govou. The use of former midfield stalwart Juninho in a supersub role is an intriguing possibility.

## MANCHESTER UNITED (ENG)

# Good and the great

**The holders need another win to join the European Cup elite**

Holder...Cristiano Ronaldo

NO TEAM HAS successfully defended the title since the European Cup mutated into the Champions League in the early 1990s. So history is against holders Manchester United.

After victory over Chelsea on penalties in Moscow in May, manager Alex Ferguson spoke of joining the pantheon of European teams. United, with three European Cups, are just one short of Ajax and Bayern Munich, with only Real Madrid, Milan and Liverpool ahead of them (on nine, seven and five respectively). So another victory would provide Ferguson with the perfect opportunity to retire at the top, though he says he will retire, whatever happens, in three years' time.

Ferguson's reputation is higher than ever. The saga of Cristiano Ronaldo's mooted move to Real Madrid this summer was a test of the manager's authority, and the Scot seems to have won the battle...for now.

After the 2007 signings of Carlos Tevez, Nani, Owen Hargreaves and Anderson, there was no way this summer would be as busy. A new striker was the prime target – with Tottenham's Dimitar Berbatov the favourite to arrive. Nani and Anderson are ready to play a bigger part in the first team this season as elder statesmen Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs prepare to take a reduced role.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE MANAGER**
**ALEX FERGUSON**
No manager in the modern game has had as much power as Ferguson. In charge for 21 years but still has burning ambition.

**THE PLAYER**
**WAYNE ROONEY**
A crucial season for the England striker as he will be expected to take on more responsibility for club and country. Can he curb his temper without losing his edge?

### FLUIDITY UP FRONT

Ferguson has always gone with pace on the wings but recently there has been more fluidity to United's game, with Tevez, Rooney and Ronaldo playing as withdrawn strikers. That might change if a new striker (Berbatov?) provides a stronger central reference point in attack.

## MARSEILLE (FRA)

# Added steel

**The club are more robust under coach Gerets, while the signing of Ben Arfa was a major coup**

Quixotic...Ben Arfa (right)

EVERYONE IN FRANCE expects big things of Marseille this season. That in itself is nothing new, but this time around there appear to be genuine reasons for such a positive outlook.

Under Belgian coach Eric Gerets, Marseille have suddenly found some steel and are becoming more streetwise. The addition of Brazilian defender Hilton from relegated Lens will tighten a back-line that conceded far too many goals – 45 – in the last domestic league campaign.

Also, Marseille pulled off a big coup in signing the quixotic Hatem Ben Arfa from rivals Lyon. If the 21-year-old can add some consistency to his undoubted talent, Marseille may well have bought themselves a gem, though Gerets will have to use all of his disciplinary guile to keep Ben Arfa on the straight and narrow.

Of course, Marseille have lost playmaker Samir Nasri to Arsenal and striker Djibril Cisse to Sunderland. But, on balance, they look better equipped for the rigours of the Champions League than the team who finished just above them in Ligue 1, Bordeaux.

Also, the Stade Velodrome, packed with passionate fans, won't be an easy place for opposing teams to come, and Marseille may just surprise one or two people.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**ERIC GERETS**
The sergeant-majorish Belgian appears to have a big enough personality to deal with the overly high expectations of everyone associated with the southern giants.

**THE PLAYER**
**MAMADOU NIANG**
The Senegalese is a prolific poacher in Ligue 1 but now has to prove he can find the net in Europe's toughest competition.

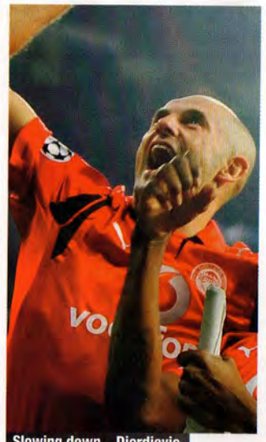
### FOUR GOING FORWARD

Gerets hasn't shied away from trying to give the fans what they want, with the use of four very attack-minded players – Ben Arfa, Karim Ziani and Bakary Kone will all get forward to support Niang. But the system leaves Marseille vulnerable to the counter-attack and the defence will need cool heads.

## OLYMPIAKOS (GRE)

# Goal challenge

**The Greek champions' lack of firepower may cost them dear**


Slowing down...Djordjevic

THE PIRAEUS CLUB'S president, Socrates Kokkalis, is a hard man to please. He fired coach Takis Lemonis in spring even though he had steered the team into the knockout stages of the Champions League for the first time in nine years.

Caretaker Jose Segura led Olympiakos over the line in the domestic title race – their 11th success in 12 seasons – then Kokkalis parachuted Ernesto Valverde into the hot seat. But although the Basque has a good track record in Europe – he took Espanyol to the runners-up spot in the 2007 UEFA Cup – he may find it more difficult to steer Olympiakos through the Champions League group than Lemonis did last term.

The big question is, where are the goals going to come from? Serb top scorer Darko Kovacevic is 34 and cannot go on for ever; long-serving left-sided schemer Predrag Djordjevic is slowing down; and talented Argentinian attacking midfielder Fernando Belluschi has failed to settle. Lomana Lua Lua is no longer an option up front; he was recently sent packing to Al Arabi in the Gulf having rarely arrived for training on time.

Good news in Piraeus was the signing of Brazilian midfield all-rounder Dudu Cearense from CSKA Moscow. Valverde will use him in an advanced role rather than as an enforcer.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**ERNESTO VALVERDE**
Those who once considered the former Athletic Bilbao and Espanyol boss too much of a nice guy to successfully lead a pro club have been proved wrong.

**THE PLAYER**
**DARKO KOVACEVIC**
The golden oldie former Yugoslavia target man has enjoyed an Indian summer since arriving in Piraeus a year ago from Real Sociedad.

### SETTING THE RHYTHM

Valverde tends to go with a very positive 4-2-3-1 or 4-4-2, with the focus on snappy passing and use of the full width of the pitch. He wants his side to dictate the rhythm and encourages the attacking players to switch position. Much will depend on wide men Luciano Galletti and Djordjevic or Sebastian Leto.

## PANATHINAIKOS (GRE)

# Heart of gold

**The team have a particularly strong midfield, which may compensate for defensive frailty**

Creative option...Ivanschitz

The club also have sufficient front-running power in Dimitris Salpigidis, Evangelos Mantzios and Lazaros Christodoulopoulos, a recent arrival from PAOK Salonika.

But no one would bank on their back-line suddenly becoming glitch-free.

Also, there are doubts about whether new coach Henk Ten Cate is the right man for the job. Yes, he has an enviable pedigree as an assistant at Barcelona and Chelsea. But he flopped in charge of Ajax, and his confrontational man-management style can sometimes be the equivalent of a grenade rolled into a crowded room.

PANATHINAIKOS finished only third in Greece last season but booked their ticket for the Champions League thanks to the vagaries of the local league, by beating runners-up AEK Athens in a play-off.

Nevertheless, Pana should not be written off immediately, and the midfield looks particularly strong. New Brazilian signing Gilberto Silva forms a resilient ball-winning unit with Alexandros Tziolis, and there are several interesting creative options, including Greek national team regular Giorgos Karagounis, boy wonder Sotiris Ninis, Austria skipper Andreas Ivanschitz and promising Croat Ante Rukavina (ex-Hajduk Split), who can play up front, too.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**HENK TEN CATE**

As assistant to Frank Rijkaard at Barcelona, he was credited as the brains behind the club's majestic attacking game.

**THE PLAYER**
**GIORGOS KARAGOUNIS**
The heart of the team. A very gutsy player who also offers industry, a delicate touch and hammer-blow shooting from free-kicks. His temper can let him down, however.

### QUICK-PACED AND IMPOSING

Ten Cate, who currently prefers a 4-2-3-1, encourages quick-paced football and wants his team to impose themselves from the start. His teams press very high indeed and so require perfect physical conditioning. Two of his pet hates are pedestrian full-backs and attacking players who do not try to beat opponents.

## PARTIZAN BELGRADE (SER)

# Young and hungry

**The Serb champions are inexperienced in European competition but have plenty of ambition**

Attack-minded...Tosic

Lamine Diarra, Partizan's top scorer last season, has a new strike partner in Veljko Paunovic, who has spent practically his whole career in Spain. Another new buy, Milos Bogunovic, from Rad Belgrade, is an attacking option.

A possible weak point is the lack of European experience within the squad. There are also concerns about the behaviour of the fans. Last season, Partizan were expelled from the UEFA Cup after supporters rioted at a game in Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Recently, the Partizan ultras demonstrated against the arrest of former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic during a friendly against Lyon in Belgrade.

PARTIZAN WERE THE first and only Serbian club to reach the Champions League group stage – in 2003-04 – and a third qualifying round tie against Fenerbahce stood in the way of a repeat.

The Belgrade side have benefited – in theory, at least – from the relative stability of the squad. It's also a young side, hungry for success. The two oldest players are captain and central defender Nenad Djordjevic, 29, and playmaker Moreira, 30.

The midfield is the strongest department. Moreira is teamed with holder Juca, new signing Ljubomir Fejsa, a hugely talented Under-21 international central midfielder, and attacking left-footer Zoran Tosic, a full international.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**SLAVISA JOKANOVIC**
The 40-year-old is in his first coaching job after a fine career as a holding midfielder. He played for Vojvodina, Partizan, Oviedo, Tenerife, Deportivo La Coruna, Chelsea and Yugoslavia/Serbia & Montenegro.

**THE PLAYER**
**MOREIRA**
The diminutive Portuguese, who has roots in Guinea-Bissau, is a clever playmaker with a good eye for a final pass.

### STRAIGHT-IN-LINE ZONAL DEFENCE

Jokanovic uses a 4-4-2 formation, just like predecessor Miroslav Djukic, comprising a straight-in-line zonal defence, a holding midfielder, central midfielder, two attacking wide men and two strikers. The technically strong Zoran Tosic often operates as a left-winger. Left-back Ivan Obradovic often joins attacks.

## PORTO (POR)

# Enter the Dragons

**The Portuguese champions had their competition ban lifted and are aiming for the last 16 again**

In with a shout...midfielder Guarin

PORTO WERE initially barred from this season's Champions League after being found guilty of corruption during the 2003-04 domestic season. But UEFA reinstated them because it decided that the case had been mishandled by the Portuguese authorities. So, after all, the Dragons have the chance of reaching the competition's knockout stages for the third season running.

The two-time European champions dominated the domestic league last season, finishing 14 points clear of runners-up Sporting Lisbon, but poor finishing cost them dearly against Schalke in the last 16 of the Champions League.

Coach Jesualdo Ferreira is relying on Argentinian duo Lucho Gonzalez and Lisandro Lopez to deliver the goods in Europe just as they have in the domestic league. But, in general, the club's large South American contingent, including no fewer than seven Argentinians, have struggled to adapt to the Champions League, and the lack of experienced European players could once again mean Porto will come up short in the knockout phase.

Pedro Emanuel is the only player remaining from the team that won the Champions League under Jose Mourinho in 2004. That high turnover does not bode well for the business end of the competition.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**JESUALDO FERREIRA**
Experienced coach who has led Porto to two straight league titles but has yet to taste any kind of success in European competition.

**THE PLAYER**
**LUCHO GONZALEZ**

Known as "El Comandante" for his goal celebration salute, the Argentinian midfielder has lived up to the name with a series of commanding displays. He pulls the strings and sets the tone.

### QUARESMA CAUSES HAVOC ON THE WINGS

Ferreira will stick with his attacking 4-2-3-1. The defence relies on the strength and aerial prowess of Bruno Alves, and the full-backs are expected to provide support for the wingers. Gonzalez will be the focal point of every move and will aim to supply Lopez up front. Ricardo Quaresma will wreak havoc on the wings.

## PSV EINDHOVEN (HOL)

# Competition time

**The Dutch champions are not quite in the European elite but are solid and hard to beat**

Is he up to it?...Koevermans

PSV have a new coach, Huub Stevens, a former player and youth coach at the club, who replaces stand-in boss Sef Vergoossen. Over the years PSV have not been a spectacular team but solid and hard to beat. This looks likely again this time round, especially since Stevens has proved he can build unified sides during spells at Schalke and Hamburg.

The main problem PSV face is up front. Lightweight attackers such as Balasz Dzsudzsak, Danko Lazovic and Nordin Amrabat are likely to struggle in European competition, while doubts persist about the ability of Danny Koevermans.

PSV, CHAMPIONS OF Holland for four consecutive seasons, have been the only Dutch side to make any kind of impact in Europe in recent years. Ultimately, they have lost out when coming up against the top clubs from England, Italy and Spain, but their run to the Champions League semi-finals in 2005 showed that they can at least compete where Ajax, for instance, fail.

And that relative success has been achieved despite the loss of key players such as Ruud Van Nistelrooy, Mark Van Bommel, Arjen Robben, Alex, Mateja Kezman and Phillip Cocu over the years. It's the same old story this time round, with keeper Heurelho Gomes (Tottenham) and forward Jefferson Farfan (Schalke) departing.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**HUUB STEVENS**
The former Roda JC and Hamburg boss has returned to the club he served as a player and youth coach. Known for his disciplinarian style.

**THE PLAYER**
**CARLOS SALCIDO**

The Mexican centre-back, who is in fact likely to play at left-back, will be the new leader in defence following the departure of keeper Gomes.

### SIMONS AND AFELLAY THE KEY MIDFIELDERS

Stevens has tried a variety of formations during pre-season but will probably opt for the 4-5-1 PSV used last season. The key midfielders are Timmy Simons (defending) and Ibrahim Afellay (attacking). Dzsudzsak, Amrabat, Jason Culina, Edison Mendez, Otman Bakkal and Reimond Manco contest the other midfield berths.

## REAL MADRID (SPA)

# No 10 dream

**The Cristiano Ronaldo saga has proved a hurdle in the quest for another Champions Cup**

Leading the charge...Van Nistelrooy

REAL MADRID'S domestic dominance could be challenged by a Pep Guardiola-inspired Barcelona this season, but Europe – and a 10th Champions Cup – has become something of an obsession for the fans.

Not that the team have come close to completing the quest in recent times: Madrid have fallen at the first knockout round for the past four seasons.

This summer, another obsession – signing Cristiano Ronaldo from Manchester United – dominated proceedings, though how much of the talk was down to club president Ramon Calderon and how much to German coach Bernd Schuster is debatable.

The whole affair soon became tiresome. Schuster himself complained that the club could lose out on other transfer deals as the stand-off with United continued. Certainly, as August came around Madrid's transfer activity had been uncharacteristically modest. The most prominent arrival was Rafael Van der Vaart from Hamburg. The Dutch attacking midfielder is a direct replacement for compatriot Wesley Sneijder, who has been sidelined for three months with a knee injury.

Argentina defender Ezequiel Garay may be recalled from a loan spell at Racing Santander, but midfielder Ruben De la Red has returned from Getafe.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**BERND SCHUSTER**
The German has moved Real away from the safety-first tactics used by predecessor Fabio Capello, though it is not the free-flowing football the fans crave.

**THE PLAYER**
**ARJEN ROBBEN**
This is a big season for the Dutch winger, whose outstanding form in the final few weeks of last season led Madrid to consider offers for Robinho.

### POSSIBILITIES, WITH OR WITHOUT ROBINHO

Madrid effectively use a 4-1-3-2, with the defensive midfield position taken by Mahamadou Diarra or Fernando Gago. If Robinho stays, he'll come in for Van der Vaart on the right of midfield, though he could also play in the Raul role off Ruud Van Nistelrooy.

## ROMA (ITA)

# Weak front

**The squad looks thinner than last season, especially with captain Totti far from fully fit**

Compensation?...Riise (right)

ROMA WERE THE closest challengers to Internazionale in Serie A last season, pushing them to the wire in their title defence. However, the fact that Roma were so prominent may say more about the paucity of the rest of the division than the prowess of Luciano Spalletti's side.

What's more, Roma look weaker than last time around. The arrival of left-back or left-sided midfielder John Arne Riise from Liverpool hardly compensates for the loss of Brazilian winger Mancini to Inter.

The summer was dominated by the search for a striker. Roma were rebuffed in their attempt to buy Adrian Mutu from Fiorentina and were also linked with Djibril Cisse. Eventually, Julio Baptista joined from Real Madrid. For some time Roma have lacked a reference point in attack and been forced into a worrying dependency on injury-prone Francesco Totti. Whether Baptista can fill the role is debatable.

There are concerns off the pitch as well, with financier George Soros dropping his interest in buying the club from the Sensi family. Soros was reportedly unhappy about the Sensis' apparent attempts to enlist interest in another buyer, believing the club were trying to force up the price. The Sensi family are still keen to sell – their company, Italpetroli, has debts of almost £300million.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**LUCIANO SPALLETTI**
The shaven-headed boss steadied the ship when taking over in 2005 and he has since impressed with his attacking brand of football

**THE PLAYER**
**FRANCESCO TOTTI**

The Roma captain is a talismanic figure, but he struggles to maintain fitness, meaning his influence could be on the wane.

### THEN THERE WERE NONE

Totti is the nominal striker but he often drops deep, meaning that Roma effectively play in a 4-6-0 formation. With the captain withdrawn, midfield runners Taddei, Simone Perrotta and Mirko Vucinic get forward to take his place. New boy Riise is likely to start at left-back.

## SCHALKE (GER)

# Flair fight

**The Ruhr team have plenty of battling qualities but lack imagination**

Heroics...Schalke reached the quarters

FANS OF THE Royal Blues from the Ruhr would do well not to expect a repeat of their Champions League heroics of last season, when they battled through to the quarter-finals by finishing second to Chelsea in the group and then beating Porto before bowing out to Barcelona.

Promising young keeper Manuel Neuer may not be available after breaking a metatarsal in his right foot in pre-season, and there has to be a doubt about whether the team have sufficient imagination in midfield, where solid, industrious players such as Jermaine Jones, Orlando Engelaar and Fabien Ernst dominate.

There is another question mark over Brazilian right-back Rafinha, who went against his club's wishes by flying out to Beijing to take part in the Olympics.

The positives include a potentially explosive front line featuring new Peruvian recruit Jefferson Farfan and German international Kevin Kuranyi, three excellent centre-backs (Mladen Krstajic, Marcelo Jose Bordon and Heiko Westermann) fighting for two spots, and the tactical expertise of new Dutch coach Fred Rutten, recruited on the back of his fine work with Twente Enschede.

At a club rarely short of internal strife, Rutten's authoritarian ways are sure to be well tested.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**FRED RUTTEN**

The Champions League holds no secrets for the former Twente Enschede central defender. He was Guus Hiddink's No 2 when PSV Eindhoven reached the semi-finals in 2005.

**THE PLAYER**
**JEFFERSON FARFAN**
The Peruvian, just signed from PSV, is quick, elusive, a proven goalscorer and flexible enough to play anywhere in the front line.

### TAKING THE INITIATIVE

Rutten prefers a 4-3-3, within which he uses either one or two defensive midfielders. Home or away, he likes his team to take the initiative, to play an attacking game based on sudden changes of tempo and quick, flat balls to the front-runners. On occasion, the coach will turn to a 4-4-2 or 4-2-3-1.

## SHAKHTAR DONETSK (UKR)

# Now or never

**The Miners are dominant in Ukraine; but only European success will truly satisfy their owner**

Super again...Shakhtar beat Dynamo

SHAKHTAR, BANKROLLED by Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov, won the domestic Double last season, pipping arch-rivals Dynamo Kyiv in both League and Cup. They also saw off the capital city side in this season's curtain-raiser, the Super Cup.

Not surprisingly, Shakhtar carried off the individual trophies, too – Brazilian midfielder Fernandinho was named player of the season and Romanian Mircea Lucescu took the coaching award.

But with domestic dominance achieved, Lucescu is well aware that Akhmetov's ultimate aim – progression to the knockout stages of the Champions League – has yet to be achieved.

In an attempt to find a balance between domestic obligations and to rest his foreign legion before European games, the coach gave priority this summer to buying rising Ukrainian stars, including keeper Rustam Khudzhamov (Kharkiv), a graduate of the Dynamo academy. He also brought back forward Yevhen Seleznyov from an impressive loan spell at Arsenal Kyiv.

There was only one foreign arrival, though it was a potentially significant one – prolific Bolivian international forward Marcelo Moreno Martins (from Cruzeiro).

Akhmetov has said that it's time for the Miners to finally show Europe some real muscle. For Lucescu, the season's slogan is "it's now or never".

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**MIRCEA LUCESCU**
Vastly experienced Romanian, in charge since 2004, who has yet to find the European success craved by owner Akhmetov.

**THE PLAYER**
**DARIJO SRNA**
The Croatian right-back or winger is loved by the fans for his never-say-die attitude and loyalty. He announced after Euro 2008 that he would stay at Shakhtar even if Manchester United made an offer.

### FULL-BACKS PUSH ON

Lucescu usually uses a 4-5-1. Both full-backs – Srna and Razvan Rat – like to get forward as much as possible but this can leave the defence exposed. In the packed midfield, Tomas Hubschman, Fernandinho and Jadson take holding positions, while wide men Ilsinho and Willian switch flanks at will.

## SLAVIA PRAGUE (CZE)

# Odd and Eden

**Slavia surpassed themselves by reaching the group stage last term. Now they have a new home to boot**

Back in training...Smicer

LAST SEASON'S Champions League adventure was as unexpected as it was welcome for Slavia. Now, having won the league championship for the first time since 1996 and returned to Eden – where they have a new stadium – after eight years in exile, the Prague side enter the new campaign with raised expectations.

Slavia were unseeded in this season's Champions League third qualifying round draw and faced a huge task to beat Fiorentina to reach the group phase. Yet the *Sesivani* ("sewn-togethereds") overcame Ajax at the same stage last year. Also, coach Karel Jarolim has a settled squad, and last year's maulings by Arsenal and Sevilla in the group stage (when Slavia finished third) were at least educational.

Slavia brought in several foreign recruits over the summer – Croatian left-back Ronald Siklic from Slaven Belupo, Guinean central midfielder Amadou Cisse from French lower league side Aubervilliers, and young Italian forward Gianluca Litteri from Internazionale. Speedy Slovak winger Dusan Svento, who missed most of last season through injury, is back in action, and Euro 96 veteran Vladimir Smicer has resumed training.

The summer's most significant departure was on-loan midfielder Daniel Pudil, who returned to Slovan Liberec and was then sold on to Genk.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**KAREL JAROLIM**
Slavia's success led to the uncompromising 51-year-old being linked with the Czech national team and Hamburg jobs last season but he remains committed to Slavia.

**THE PLAYER**
**DUSAN SVENTO**
The speedy Slovak winger missed virtually the whole of last season through injury. Now fit, he has been used as a forward in recent weeks.

### COMPETITION ON THE FLANKS

Jarolim favours 4-4-2 but is likely to switch to 4-5-1 in bigger European games. Matej Krajcik is challenging Theodor Gebre Selassie for the right-sided midfield position. Jaroslav Cerny faces competition from pacy Petr Janda on the left.

## SPARTA PRAGUE (CZE)

# Don't look back

**There is a much more positive feel to the club after last season's troubles**

Problem solved?...Blazek

LAST SEASON WAS one to forget for Sparta, traditionally Czech football's strongest team. Having been knocked out of the Champions League in the third qualifying round by Arsenal, Sparta lurched from scandal to scandal and ceded the league championship to arch-rivals Slavia.

Coach Michal Bilek was dismissed at the end of the campaign, and Sparta managed to prise Vitezslav Lavicka away from the Czech Under-21 team to replace him. Much is expected of the new man, who also led Sparta briefly in 2002.

Veteran midfielder Patrik Berger was the most significant squad addition this summer, returning to the Czech League after 13 years abroad.

Keeper Jaromir Blazek has returned to Sparta after a year with Nurnberg to fill last season's problem position. The end of the loan of Tomas Sivok from Udinese and the collapse of a deal to bring experienced Pavel Drsek in from Bochum led Lavicka to take Stepan Kucera on loan from Club Brugge to partner Tomas Repka in central defence.

Other notable additions include Slovak left-back Marian Had, on loan from FC Moscow, and young striker Vaclav Kadlec, from Bohemians 1905.

The squad certainly has talent but Lavicka had limited time to shape the team before the business end of the European campaign.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**VITEZSLAV LAVICKA**
The 45-year-old is starting his second spell at the Letna. His biggest achievement to date was leading unfashionable Slovan Liberec to the 2006 Czech title.

**THE PLAYER**
**PATRIK BERGER**
The former international's return home was one of the big football stories of the Czech summer but can the injury-prone 34-year-old stay fit?

### BERGER TAKES CREATIVE ROLE

In pre-season, Lavicka has stuck to 4-4-2 but is likely to switch to 4-5-1 against tougher opponents. Berger should assume the creative role in midfield, with either Jiri Kladrubsky or Ondrej Kusnir on the right. Both the latter pair could figure in a five-man midfield. Miroslav Slepicka is Sparta's main source of goals.

## SPARTAK MOSCOW (RUS)

# Full of frustration

**The underpowered team keep missing out on the domestic title, and the fans are revolting**

Heavy defeat...Spartak (red) v CSKA

SPARTAK HAVE FINISHED runners-up in the Russian League for the past three seasons and have now not won the title for seven years, when they took the crown for a record ninth time.

The team's recent Champions League performances have left much to be desired, too, especially compared to the red-and-whites' impressive continental victories of the 1990s.

The club's oil company owners, Lukoil, have fired one coach after another in an attempt to revive the famous "Spartak spirit" and the team's distinctive short-passing style. But the futility of these attempts, and especially the inability to beat arch-rivals CSKA Moscow for seven years running, has turned the fans against the team – literally. They turned their backs to the pitch when Spartak conceded the fourth goal in their recent 5-1 home drubbing by CSKA and then left the stadium in protest long before the end of the match. They did the same as early as the 10th minute of the next game – another Moscow derby, against Lokomotiv, a 2-2 draw.

In response to the results, a group of players, including veteran captain Yegor Titov, were dropped. Titov has now moved to Khimki. Meanwhile, the balance of the team looks all wrong. Local talent does not get enough playing time, while the numerous foreign acquisitions have generally failed to deliver.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**STANISLAV CHERCHESOV**
The former Spartak and Russia goalkeeper rejoined the club as technical director after a long spell in Austria and then took the coach's job in summer 2007.

**THE PLAYER**
**ROMAN PAVLYUCHENKO**
Dubbed "a sleeping giant" by national coach Guus Hiddink but awoke at Euro 2008 to score three goals. The Russian League's top scorer in 2006 and 2007.

### SPEEDY WIDE MEN OFFER SUPPORT

Pavlyuchenko is usually partnered by Welliton, who plays a little further back. The forwards are supported by the speedy Vladimir Bystrov and Nikita Bazenov from the flanks. Mozart does the defensive work in midfield. Talented Alexandr Pavlenko has taken the place of departed playmaker Titov.

## SPORTING LISBON (POR)

# Dropping down

**The Lions are getting used to UEFA Cup action after failing in the Champions League**

Hoop-la...Liedson v Rangers last term

SPORTING LISBON HAVE never made it to the knockout stages of the Champions League, having reached the group stage four times. Last season they finished third in a group containing Manchester United, Roma and Dynamo Kyiv.

The group stage necessarily demands some consistency, and the Lions' failure to show enough of that quality stems partly from the lack of continuity in the squad. Over the past five seasons the club have sold such talented youngsters as Hugo Viana, Cristiano Ronaldo, Ricardo Quaresma and Nani, and not only did Sporting not get the full benefit of their talent but also they attempted to replace them with mediocre Brazilians and inexperienced eastern Europeans. This has just not been enough for the club to make their mark in Europe's top club competition.

The signs are that Sporting will once again struggle in the group phase and be forced to settle for a tilt at the UEFA Cup. In the latter competition last season they lost to Rangers in the quarter-finals. They came even closer to winning the trophy in 2005, losing to CSKA Moscow in the Final.

The coach then was Jose Peseiro, now in charge of Rapid Bucharest. His successor, Paulo Bento, has won two Portuguese Cups but a European trophy has remained elusive.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**PAULO BENTO**
Took charge in 2005 and has won the Portuguese Cup for the past two seasons but has yet to lead the club into the Champions League knockout stages.

**THE PLAYER**
**FABIO ROCHEMBACK**
The midfielder, back with Sporting after three ineffective seasons at Middlesbrough, is expected to set the rhythm of play.

### LIEDSON BENEFITS FROM EXPERIENCE

Paulo Bento has used a 4-4-2 with midfield diamond since taking charge. Rochemback plays at the base of the diamond and has the responsibility of deciding when to attack and when to defend. Striker Liedson, club top scorer for four seasons, now has the advantage of playing with an experienced partner, Helder Postiga or Derlei.

## STANDARD LIEGE (BLG)

# Sudden exposure

**The team look a little young and raw for big European games and have lost their protective boss**

Title ecstasy...Defour

MICHEL PREUD'HOMME, the coach who guided Standard to their first Belgian league title in a quarter of a century last season, will not be leading them into Europe. Angered that his reward was just a year's contract extension, he walked off to join Gent.

That came as a shock for the Standard players, towards whom Preud'homme was very protective.

His successor, former Romanian international and national team coach Laszlo Boloni, is a much more aloof character and ready to publicly criticise his players when he sees fit.

Today's Standard can only dream of raising their game to the level of the class of 1982, who reached the Cup-winners Cup Final. But they are at least moving in the right direction after years of stagnation. The young side are likely to be too raw to stand toe to toe with the Champions League's big-hitters, but the UEFA Cup may prove a happy hunting ground.

Standard's new arrivals are not high-profile – French midfielder Wilfried Dalmat (Nantes) and two Croats: left-back Tomislav Mikulic (Dinamo Zagreb) and forward Leon Benko (Nurnberg) – but the cohesion and spirit the team exhibited last season should serve them well again. And in midfield they have a trio of immense promise: Axel Witsel on the left, skipper and chief prompter Steven Defour and holder Marouane Fellaini.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**LASZLO BOLONI**
The former Romania boss takes charge after a spell in charge of Abu Dhabi club Al Jazeera. Previously worked in France, with Rennes and Monaco. A member of the Steaua Bucharest side that won the 1986 European Cup.

**THE PLAYER**
**STEVEN DEFOUR**
The Belgian player of the year for 2007 has poise, a high workrate and an eye for a through ball.

### DITCH THE LONG BALLS, GO LATIN

Boloni, who tends to alternate between a 4-1-3-2 and 4-2-3-1, wants to wean Standard off what he sees as an over-reliance on athleticism and long, high balls. His aim is to introduce a more technical, Latin style, with ball retention and extensive use of the flanks.

## STEAUA BUCHAREST (ROM)

# Ducking and diving

**Owner Becali has shuffled the pack on the pitch and is at the heart of a scandal off it**

Great buy...Szekely

STEAUA'S FAILURE TO win either the League or Cup in Romania last season prompted furious owner Gigi Becali to offload no fewer than nine of last season's first-team players, while bringing in several Latin Americans. But it was the signing of Romanian attacking midfielder Janos Szekely from Otelul Galati that many considered the transfer of the summer in Romania.

The comings and goings in the squad have been overshadowed by a scandal involving Becali, who was accused of attempting to pay Universitatea Cluj a "sweetener" to do their utmost in the final league round, in which they faced CFR Cluj. In fact, CFR won to take the title and force Steaua to settle for second place.

The accusations rumbled on throughout the summer. Just days before the new season started, Becali claimed federation president Mircea Sandu had asked him for payment in return for clearing his name about the alleged corruption. Sandu denied the accusation but Becali started a campaign among the federation members to oust the president. The Steaua boss's favoured candidate to replace Sandu is ex-international Gica Popescu.

Becali's decision to attack the federation leadership has split Romanian soccer and has certainly distracted the club from the matter in hand on the pitch.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**MARIUS LACATUS**
The former Steaua star is an iconic figure at the club who aims to instil in the current squad the sense of pride felt when Steaua were European champions.

**THE PLAYER**
**MIREL RADOI**
The skipper is the team's soul. Radoi has great drive and often comes to the rescue when the team are in danger.

### MORENO TAKES PLAYMAKER ROLE

Lacatus will stick with his preferred 4-1-3-2 formation, in which Dayro Moreno replaces Nicolae Dica, now at Catania, as playmaker. New Brazilian signing Arthuro has increased Steaua's firepower. Mirel Radoi, normally a defensive midfielder, has dropped back into central defence.

## TWENTE ENSCHEDE (HOL)

# High ambitions

**The club are aiming to join the Dutch elite permanently and repeat their Euro success of the 1970s**

Testing...forward Elia (right) v Ajax

TWENTE CHAIRMAN Joop Munsterman was disappointed when his club were drawn against Arsenal in the Champions League third qualifying round. Any other debutants would regard the tie with relish, but not Munsterman, who said flatly: "It will be difficult to qualify."

His reaction says a lot about the high ambitions of Twente, who need the continental experience and money to fulfil their aim of joining the elite of Dutch clubs (PSV Eindhoven, Ajax and Feyenoord) on a permanent basis and become regular Champions League competitors.

This season the Enschede club take a giant leap forwards. The capacity of the Grolsch Veste stadium (until this season known as Arke) is being increased to 24,353 from 13,250. Because of the construction work, home matches will be played at Vitesse Arnhem's Gelredome. The club's budget has been raised sharply, from £13million to £22m, and Munsterman managed to attract ex-England manager Steve McClaren.

The chairman wants to revive memories of the days when Twente were a top club in Holland. Between 1972 and 1976 they finished no lower than fourth in the League and in the same period reached the UEFA Cup Final (1975) and semi-finals (1973).

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**STEVE McCLAREN**
Surprised many by making Twente his first continental port of call. He had been advised to do so by Bobby Robson, like McClaren an ex-England boss who also had two spells at PSV.

**THE PLAYER**
**BLAISE NKUFO**
The bullish Switzerland striker used to change club every year but is now starting his fifth season in Enschede and is on target to break the club's scoring record.

### AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT

McClaren won't change much given Twente's success and the fact they play some of the best football in Holland. The team rely on the solid backbone of keeper Sander Boschker and centre-backs Rob Wielaert and Douglas. Theo Janssen and Cheikh Tiote have replaced the departed Karim El Ahmadi and Orlando Engelaar in midfield.

## VILLARREAL (SPA)

# Ariel power

**Clever playmaker Ibagaza has been signed to help Villarreal with their fight on two fronts**

Glee club...defender Javi Venta scores

VILLARREAL REACHED the Champions League semi-finals in 2006 and were a Juan Riquelme penalty miss away from beating Arsenal. But the club, known as the Yellow Submarine because of their brightly coloured shirts, suffered bad fallout from that run – their domestic league form collapsed and they missed out on a Champions League place for the following season.

However, last season they finished a highly creditable second in La Liga, 10 points behind Real Madrid but 10 ahead of third-placed Barcelona. This summer, they have invested wisely in a number of new recruits. The most important arrival was Ariel Ibagaza, the clever little Argentinian playmaker who was outstanding at Mallorca last season.

Villarreal also signed American wonderkid Jozy Altidore from Major League Soccer in a £5million deal. He was set to be loaned out to another Spanish club to gain experience – but that only underlined the attacking options available to coach Manuel Pellegrini.

The Chilean is contemplating whether his normal attacking game can work in the Champions League. One factor that could affect his thinking is the form of Marcos Senna at Euro 2008, where he played as a lone defensive midfielder. He may now be asked to do the same in Europe.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**MANUEL PELLEGRINI**
The Chilean is La Liga's longest-serving coach, having taken charge of Villarreal in 2004.

**THE PLAYER**
**MARCOS SENNA**
The Brazil-born Spanish international midfielder demonstrated his worth at Euro 2008, providing the solid platform from which his team-mates could attack. He has a similar role at club level.

### FOCUS ON ATTACK

Villarreal have arguably the most attack-minded formation of any Champions League team, with wingers Robert Pires and Santi Cazorla interchanging behind Nihat Kahveci and Ibagaza. But if they need to tighten up Sebastian Eguren or Edmilson could be used to bolster defensive midfield alongside Senna.

## VITORIA GUIMARAES (POR)

# Amazing recovery

**Guimaraes were relegated just two years ago but are now in their first Champions League campaign**

Challenging...midfielder Joao Alves

FROM THE SECOND division to the Champions League in only two seasons – this is the amazing feat accomplished by Vitoria Guimaraes. Nobody would have predicted that the northern side could recover in such style from being relegated to Portugal's second tier in 2006. But they sealed their place in Europe's top club competition after winning promotion and then pipping Benfica for third place on their return to the top division.

This is Guimaraes' first Champions League appearance and they have never won the Portuguese league title or any other domestic trophy, so they will be regarded as one of the minnows of the competition.

They will certainly not be expected to progress past the group phase – assuming they have got through their third qualifying round tie against Basle – but no one should underestimate their determination and resilience, especially at home. Last season, they beat both Sporting Lisbon and Benfica at the D Afonso Henrique stadium, and, roared on by their passionate supporters, this team could surprise even the giants of European football.

Then again, if they experience stage fright, they could very well be embarrassed, considering the limited European experience of the squad.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**MANUEL CAJUDA**
Has overseen an impressive transformation at Vitoria, his fiery character motivating the side to reach unprecedented heights.

**THE PLAYER**
**HENRIQUE SERENO**
Rock-solid central defender who looks set for a call-up to the Portuguese national team if he continues to display the composure and awareness demonstrated last season.

### CEDE POSSESSION, HIT ON THE COUNTER

Guimaraes are a well-organised unit built on a solid back-line. Sereno and Moreno are uncompromising defenders with great tenacity and discipline. The team do not mind giving the opposition plenty of possession, looking instead for opportunities to mount counter-attacks. Yves Desmarets' flair is crucial for creating chances.

## WERDER BREMEN (GER)

# Attacking concerns

**Werder rely on their free-scoring style to outdo opponents; but what if the goals dry up?**

Enough ability?...Sanogo

UNDER COACH Thomas Schaaf, Werder have won many friends with their all-out attacking style, a "you score two, we'll score three" philosophy that can border on the suicidal in Europe.

So, given the team's reliance on hitting the net, it must be a concern that there are question marks over a number of attacking players.

Only on September 1, just after the transfer window has closed, will we know for sure whether in-demand playmaker Diego has remained in northern Germany for a third season (the Brazilian caused further consternation at the club by going to the Olympics without permission). And while forwards Boubacar Sanogo, Hugo Almeida and Markus Rosenberg have proved themselves to be competent at Bundesliga level, there are doubts about their ability to cut it in the Champions League.

Should general manager Klaus Allofs pull a big-name goalgetter out of the hat, the outlook will be so much brighter.

Vital to Werder's chances will be the drive and physicality of midfielder Torsten Frings. The club also need central defenders Naldo and Per Mertesacker to show more consistency.

All in all, Werder, who were runners-up in the Bundesliga last term, 10 points behind Bayern Munich, will be delighted to reach the knockout phase.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**THOMAS SCHAAF**
A 100 per cent Werder man, having spent 17 years as a defender at the club and 15 as a coach at various levels. Schaaf's bland exterior hides an intensely competitive attitude.

**THE PLAYER**
**TORSTEN FRINGS**
A natural leader whose vitality and commitment in midfield set the tone for the team as a whole. While he grafts and cajoles, others embroider.

### ENTERPRISING, FLUID, RISK-TAKING

Schaaf gives short shrift to the in-vogue 4-2-3-1, saying: "It's not an attacking set-up." He much prefers 4-4-2, with a midfield diamond of Frings at the base, Daniel Jensen and Aaron Hunt tucked in further forward, and Diego roaming free. The team are enterprising, fluid and risk-taking. Too bad if the back door is left ajar.

## WISLA KRAKOW (POL)

# Hole lot of trouble

**The Polish champions' lack of adequate cover was exposed when defensive rock Glowacki was injured**

Beating Beitar...Wisla score another

WISLA'S ENTRY TO this season's Champions League third qualifying round was their fifth attempt to reach the group stage – and every previous one had ended in failure.

Clearly, in being drawn with Barcelona this time round, their dream again looked as if it would remain unfulfilled. Apart from the Catalans' superior quality, they had history on their side – Barca beat Wisla 5-3 on aggregate at the same stage in 2001.

But the Polish champions' belief that they could spring a surprise was certainly not dented by the fact that they had hammered Israeli champions Beitar Jerusalem 5-0 at home in the second qualifying round to win 6-2 on aggregate.

However, there is no denying that the squad lacks strength in depth. Club owner Boguslaw Cupial refused to splash out on new recruits in the summer, exactly with those previous Champions League failures in mind – he said any signings "could be worthless investments" if Wisla did not make it to the group stage.

As for the existing squad, Wisla simply do not have adequate cover for several positions. When central defensive rock Arkadiusz Glowacki was injured in the first leg against Beitar, Wisla had no substitute at all. In the end, Costa Rican left-back Junior Diaz filled the gap.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**MACIEJ SKORZA**
One of the youngest (36) and most promising Polish coaches around. Skorza was in his first season at Wisla when they won the league title last season.

**THE PLAYER**
**PAWEL BROZEK**
The 25-year-old striker was league top scorer last season with 23 goals. He's dangerous in all kinds of situations.

### CENTRALISATION OF POWER

Skorza has given the midfield more power by introducing Tomas Jirsak alongside battlers Radoslaw Sobolewski and Mauro Cantoro. Wide midfielders Rafal Boguski (who can also play as a second striker) and Marek Zienczuk are important offensively. Glowacki should replace Diaz at centre-back when fit.

## ZENIT ST PETERSBURG (RUS)

# Energy drain

**The Russian champions have found it tough going this summer after their UEFA Cup exploits**

Glory day...Zenit win the UEFA Cup

THE UEFA CUP holders and Russia's richest club make their debut in the Champions League following their domestic championship triumph of 2007.

The club had their first taste of success in almost quarter of a century thanks to the expertise of coach Dick Advocaat and the lavish investment from Gazprom, Russia's largest energy company.

However, having staked everything on winning the UEFA Cup, Zenit have lost momentum in the domestic league. This summer they have faced a tough schedule of games, postponed during their European run, and were only in mid-table by mid-season. They also lost two key players to injury – Belgian centre-back Nicolas Lombaerts and Russian international striker Pavel Pogrebnyak.

The squad have little strength in depth. Zenit used just 18 players in the first half of the domestic championship, fewer than any other club. Also, goalkeeper Viacheslav Malafeev, reserve at Euro 2008, has made big mistakes in almost every game.

The team's owners, who bought defensive midfielder and captain Anatoliy Tymoshchuk from Shakhtar Donetsk for £10million last year, promised new purchases by the end of summer and offered Russia's highest-paid player, Andrei Arshavin, a significant pay rise to drop his plans of going abroad.

### THE MAIN MEN

**THE COACH**
**DICK ADVOCAAT**
The experienced Dutchman joined Zenit in July 2006 and took the team to unexpected heights last year and this.

**THE PLAYER**
**ANDREI ARSHAVIN**
The 27-year-old is still at Zenit despite receiving a number of lucrative offers from major clubs after his starring performances at Euro 2008, his first major international tournament.

### THREE MIDFIELDERS IN ATTACK

Wing play is especially important for Advocaat's attacking style. The coach says that in the absence of injured centre-forward Pogrebnyak, he uses three strikers. But the trio, who constantly switch positions, are in fact midfielders. Skipper Tymoshchuk is great in a sweeper role in front of the back four.

## AEK ATHENS (GRE)

Headhunted...Donis

As usual here, there was much coming and going in the squad, and new coach Giorgos Donis has little time to create a cohesive, winning unit. The departees included centre-back Traianos Dellas (Anorthosis Famagusta), forward Nikos Limberopoulos (Eintracht Frankfurt) and whiz-kid defender Sokratis Papastathopoulos (Genoa). Most newcomers are experienced – stopper Sotirios Kyrgiakos (Eintracht Frankfurt), midfield anchor Angelos Basinas (Mallorca) and Swedish central defender Daniel Majstorovic (Basle).

### THE COACH

Giorgos Donis was headhunted by AEK after excellent work with unfashionable Larisa, whom he led to the Greek Cup in 2007.

### KEY PLAYER

Greece captain Angelos Basinas is a midfield gem, combining ball-winning ability, vision and fine distribution.

Donis is a 4-3-3 man but for how long will he persist in putting Rivaldo, who's allergic to defensive duties, in left midfield? The use of a 4-2-3-1 would allow the Brazilian to focus on what he does best – creating chances.

AEK ATHENS

## AJAX (HOL)

The Amsterdam club, who have been without continental success for over a decade, have given new coach Marco Van Basten a free hand to revive them. But closing the gap on PSV in the domestic league is more of a priority than the UEFA Cup – last season the Amsterdammers missed

Learning curve...Huntelaar

out on the Champions League for the third year running. Van Basten has lost Edgar Davids and John Heitinga, but added Barcelona's Oleguer and young talents Miralem Sulejmani and Ismail Aissati.

### THE COACH

Marco Van Basten, who scored 128 goals in five seasons as an Ajax player, returns to the club after four years as national coach.

### KEY PLAYER

Leading striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar is ready to take the next step in his career, but may learn a few things from Van Basten before leaving for Italy or Spain.

Van Basten will opt for Ajax's traditional 4-3-3, with the exception that Luis Suarez and Sulejmani aren't real wingers but strikers and will often come inside to support Huntelaar. Aissati will play behind the trio.

AJAX

## APOEL NICOSIA (CYP)

Sparkling...APOEL win the Cup

The Cypriot cup holders lost their backbone in the off-season, Greek national team stopper Michalis Kapsis heading home to play for Levadiakos, veteran Greek striker Nikos Machlas hanging up his boots and influential midfielder Constantinos Makrides lured away by Ukraine outfit Metalurh Donetsk. There was a distinct Polish theme to APOEL's recruitment – ex-national team striker Marcin Zewlakow and left-flank creator Kamil Kosowski arrived from Gent and Cadiz respectively, and the Cypriots also bought Wisla Krakow's Brazilian playmaker Jean Paulista.

### THE COACH

Serb Ivan Jovanovic began his second spell at the APOEL helm in January. In his first, he guided them to the Cypriot league title in 2004.

### KEY PLAYER

Marcin Zewlakow is a strong, durable striker who played at the 2002 World Cup. Had almost a decade in Belgium with Beveren, Mouscron and Gent.

APOEL will play conservatively in Europe, with the full-backs sitting back and wide midfielders Kostas Charalambides and Kosowski tucking in at the merest hint of trouble. Paulista has a free role in behind Zewlakow.

APOEL NICOSIA

## ARIS SALONIKA (GRE)

Aris were plunged into crisis two days into pre-season training when coach Dusan Bajevic resigned after a row with the board about how to deal with wantaway star centre-back Avraam Papadopoulos. To fill the vacancy, Aris turned to former coach Enrique Hernandez, who led them for six months in 2006-07. Papadopoulos eventually made the switch to Olympiakos, while a host of new boys checked in, including Polish striker Piotr Wlodarcyk (Zaglebie Lubin),

Real thing...Koke

promising keeper Michalis Sifakis (OFI Crete) and Uruguayan centre-back Alejandro Lembo (Danubio).

### THE COACH

Spaniard Enrique Hernandez is a down-to-earth, stoical type who has coached all over his homeland, including Elche, Almeria and Recreativo.

### KEY PLAYER

Koke is an attacker of considerable flair, awareness and goal threat.

A 4-4-2 has looked the most balanced formation in pre-season friendlies. In midfield, Konstantinos Nebegleras and Nacho provide the ballast, leaving Toni Calvo and Mario Regueiro to invent on the flanks.

ARIS SALONIKA



## ASTON VILLA (ENG)

Villa have been reinvigorated over the past two years under Martin O'Neill's management and Randy Lerner's ownership. They finished sixth in the League last season to go into the InterToto Cup, which they came through comfortably. Their summer was dominated by the stand-off with Liverpool about midfielder Gareth Barry. Steve Sidwell was signed from Chelsea as a replacement for Barry, who ended up staying, and Villa also have exciting youngsters Gabriel Agbonlahor and Ashley Young. But with Olof Mellberg departed for Juventus and Wilfred Bouma out injured, the squad looks as if it may be stretched.

### THE MANAGER

Martin O'Neill, nicknamed Saint Martin by Celtic fans after the run to the 2003 UEFA Cup Final, brings pride and intellect to his teams.

### KEY PLAYER

Bulgarian Stilian Petrov is Villa's midfield schemer.

Pacy...Agbonlahor

A straight 4-4-2. In attack, there's pace (Agbonlahor) and height (John Carew); in midfield, scheming from Petrov, dynamism from Sidwell and speed on the flanks from Young. But defensive options are limited.

ASTON VILLA

## AUSTRIA WIEN (AUT)

Austria Wien have had to tighten their belts since the departure of billionaire patron Frank Stronach. But general manager Thomas Parits has still managed to invest wisely, signing the domestic league's coach of the season for 2007-08, Karl Daxbacher,

True star...Bazina

from LASK Linz, and playmaker Mario Bazina from city rivals Rapid. The squad includes Sun Xiang, the domestic league's first Chinese player.

### THE COACH

Former Austria defender Karl Daxbacher developed a winning formula with LASK last season and believes the system can lead him to league titles with Austria, who have more strength in depth.

### KEY PLAYER

Playmaker Mario Bazina is the true star of the team. The technically skilled Croatian international has already won league titles with Grazer AK and Rapid.

The team have been renowned for their short-passing style since the 1930s. However, Daxbacher has said he plans to modernise and add more physical strength and pace to the Violets' game.

AUSTRIA WIEN

## BANIK OSTRAVA (CZE)

Banik Ostrava have always benefited from their intimidating stadium and formidable youth system. Last season, however, Vaclav Sverkos' prolific goalscoring – 15 in the League – turned the Silesian club into title contenders. What's more, Sverkos is still on the books after he had a change of heart about a move to Russian club Saturn. Forward Lukas Magera (Poli Timisoara) and midfielder David Bystron (Levski

Just landed...Strihavka (left)

Sofia) have been sold, to be replaced by David Strihavka (Slavia Prague) and Mario Licka (Southampton).

### THE COACH

The moustachioed Karel Vecera is one of the Czech League's most respected coaches. He took charge at Ostrava in 2006 after spells with Jihlava, Brno and Drnovice.

### KEY PLAYER

Vaclav Sverkos is one of the few current Czech internationals still in the domestic league.

Last season's third place was achieved despite the long injury absence of playmaker Martin Lukes. Now fit, he faces competition from the man signed to replace him, Rudolf Otepka. Sverkos and Strihavka could form a potent strike partnership.

BANIK OSTRAVA

## BELLINZONA (SWI)

Cunning...Lustrinelli

Bellinzona, back in the Swiss top flight for the first time in 18 years, will look upon their debut European campaign as a wonderful adventure while concentrating on staying out of the domestic relegation zone. The team, who were finalists in the Swiss Cup last term, losing to champions Basle, have a big advantage in that hardly anyone knows about them. They could surprise complacent opponents.

### THE COACH

Marco Schallibaum, formerly in charge of Basle, Young Boys, Servette, Sion and Schaffhausen, took over recently following the departure of Vladimir Petkovic for Young Boys.

### KEY PLAYER

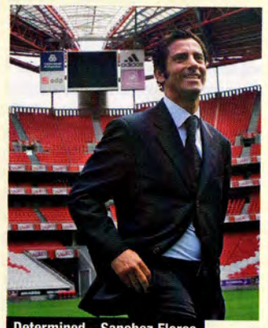
Swiss international Mauro Lustrinelli is a cunning goalpoacher. He was a star of Thun's surprise assault on the Champions League three years ago.

Bellinzona's compactness, ability to press high up the pitch and technical finesse make them a team to be wary of. The Achilles heel is the rather green central defensive pairing of Alessandro Mangiarratti and Iacopo La Rocca.

BELLINZONA

## BENFICA (POR)

Benfica are not competing in the Champions League for the first time in six seasons after finishing only fourth in the domestic league. Coaches Fernando Santos, Jose Antonio Camacho and Fernando Chalana all came and went during a turbulent campaign. New boss Quique Sanchez Flores has declared his main objective is to "wake a sleeping giant". The squad has been strengthened by the addition of Pablo Aimar, Carlos Martins and Javier Balboa.


Determined...Sanchez Flores

### THE COACH

Spaniard Quique Sanchez Flores is a determined and disciplined boss. Sacked by Valencia last season after a poor run of results.

### KEY PLAYER

Pablo Aimar, who showed flashes of brilliance at Valencia and Zaragoza, has been chosen to replace Rui Costa as Benfica's maestro.

Sanchez Flores has experimented with several formations but is expected to rely on his trusted 4-2-3-1 in most games. Aimar will be the focal point of every move. He should also have the freedom to roam and create scoring chances.

## BESIKTAS (TUR)

Classy No 10...Delgado

How not to prepare for a campaign. During a training camp in Austria, a fight broke out between skipper Ibrahim Toroman and predecessor Ibrahim Uzulmez, resulting in large fines for both. Strangely, coach Ertugrul Saglam said the incident had "strengthened team spirit". Many fans are unimpressed by the new foreign signings, including Czech defenders Tomas Sivok and Tomas Zapotocny (both Udinese) and Croat left-back Anthony Seric (Panathinaikos). But dynamic midfield holder Ugur Inceman (Manisaspor) was given the thumbs-up.

### THE COACH

Ex-Besiktas forward Ertugrul Saglam was appointed boss in 2007 after impressing with Kayserispor.

### KEY PLAYER

Argentinian Matias Delgado was labelled a flop at first but the classy No 10 and now captain has proved his critics wrong.

Saglam feels all the bases are covered by a 4-2-3-1 in which lone striker Bobo is supported by Filip Holosko, playmaker Delgado and left-winger Aydin Karabulut.

## BORAC CACAK (SER)

Fourth place in the Serbian League last term was a neat achievement for Borac, a provincial club who are making their UEFA Cup debut. They have modest resources – the team travelled by bus to Moldova to face Dacia in the first qualifying round, a 20-hour journey – and have to play home UEFA Cup games in Smederevo because their stadium is not up to scratch. Key figures are attacking midfielders Darko Lazovic and Milos Stojcev and strikers Boban Stojanovic and Igor Grkajac. Borac can play nice football but progression to the group stage would be a sensation.

### THE COACH

Milovan Rajevac had a successful time in charge of Vojvodina Novi Sad in 2006-07. This is his second spell at the Borac helm.

### KEY PLAYER

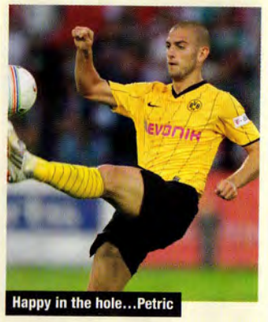
Ex-Red Star Belgrade forward Boban Stojanovic gets involved in all aspects of the team's play.

Completely involved...Stojanovic

Borac use a 4-4-2 formation, play a good passing game and can mount quick, dangerous counter-attacks. Ex-Serbia & Montenegro international Boban Dmitrovic is a reliable defender and also offers good distribution.

## BORUSSIA DORTMUND (GER)

Dortmund were runners-up to Feyenoord in the 2001-02 UEFA Cup and look as if they could be on their way back to the upper reaches of European football following a few years of financial hardship and underachievement on the pitch. New coach Jurgen Klopp, lured away from Mainz, is one of the new breed of progressive German coaches. Also, after signing several duds in the past, general manager Michael Zorc has hit paydirt with centre-backs Neven


Happy in the hole...Petric

Subotic (Mainz) and Felipe Santana (Figueirense) and attacking midfielder Tamas Hajnal (Karlsruhe).

### THE COACH

The bright, young Jurgen Klopp has succeeded Thomas Doll after seven and a half seasons at Mainz.

### KEY PLAYER

Croat Mladen Petric was top scorer last season with 13 goals and is at home in the hole or as an out-and-out striker.

Klopp likes to put on an attacking show. Using a 4-4-2 or 4-3-2-1, he encourages swiftly constructed forward sorties and favours defenders who are comfortable on the ball and midfielders happy to run deep into enemy territory.

## BRONDBY (DEN)

Brondby had a fine start to the domestic league season, winning their first two matches, a welcome change after some disappointing times following the departure of coach Michael Laudrup. One shadow is the potential departure of lively Zambian striker Chris Katonga, who has interested several German clubs. Brondby won the Danish Cup last season to qualify for the UEFA Cup, in which they put up the best ever showing by a Danish club in Europe – reaching the semi-finals in 1991-92.

### THE COACH

Youth team boss Tom Kohlert is now in his third spell in charge of the seniors. Will be replaced by Kent Nielsen in January.

### KEY PLAYER

Swedish central defender Max Von Schlebrugge has been in free-scoring form.

Central figure...Morten Rasmussen

Brondby play in a standard 4-4-2 formation. Von Schlebrugge and Thomas Rasmussen are solid presences at the back, while Morten "Duncan" Rasmussen is the main striker.

## CHERNO MORE (BUL)

Cherno More, from Varna on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, are competing in Europe for the first time. They finished only fifth in the League but made it into the UEFA Cup because champions CSKA Sofia were excluded from the Champions League and everyone else moved up one. They have lost experienced players such as defender Alexander Tomash and forward Konstantin Mirchev, but gained keeper Evgeniy Hmaruk from Moldova, Georgi Iliev and Yordan Yurukov from CSKA, and former CSKA

Through back door...Cherno More (hoops)

man Milen Petkov, who has played in Greece for eight years.

### THE COACH

Nikola Spassov is a former Cherno More player.

### KEY PLAYER

Midfielder Aleksandar Aleksandrov, known as Alex, was the best player in Bulgaria during his time at Levski Sofia in the late 1990s. Joined Cherno More after a long spell in Turkey.

In midfield, Aleksandrov – "Alex" – plays alongside his namesake, Alexander Alexandrov, with Georgi Andonov and Stanislav Stoyanov as possible replacements. Miroslav Manolov is the lone striker.

## CLUB BRUGGE (BLG)

Much missed...Sterchele

Brugge, UEFA Cup finalists in 1976, are still under a cloud because of the death of striker Francois Sterchele in a car crash in May. But the club seem to have bought well in the close season, bringing in Venezuelan attacking midfielder or forward Ronald Vargas (Caracas), lively Moroccan left-winger Nabil Dirar (Westerlo), Belgian Under-21 defender Laurent Ciman (Charleroi) and Nigerian forward Joseph Akpala, top scorer in the Belgian League last season with 18 goals for Charleroi.

### THE COACH

Jacky Mathijssen, in his second season at Brugge, is always ready to play mind games with the opposition or match officials.

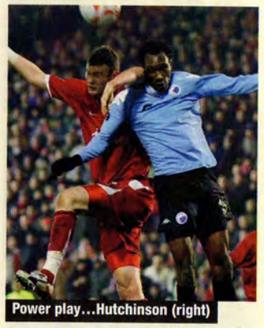
### KEY PLAYER

Diminutive Venezuelan Ronald Vargas is an exciting young attacking midfielder or forward nicknamed The Pearl.

Mathijssen usually goes for a 4-3-3 or 4-4-2 and, as usual with Belgian sides, the emphasis is on raw-boned energy and a direct attacking style. When not in possession, Brugge immediately switch to a 4-5-1.

## FC COPENHAGEN (DEN)

Denmark's biggest club have dropped down in status this season following their failure to win the domestic league. Their European pedigree is good, though, as shown by their Champions League group stage results two seasons ago when they beat Manchester United and Celtic at home. Many of that team are still at the club, and Copenhagen at their best could give any side in the UEFA Cup some trouble, especially if new Danish international striker Morten Nordstrand fulfils his potential. Mads


Power play...Hutchinson (right)

Laudrup, son of Michael, is now in the first-team squad.

### THE COACH

Norwegian Stale Solbakken is a tough taskmaster. Had a spell at Wimbledon as a player.

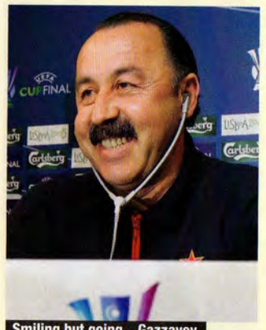
### KEY PLAYER

Versatile Canadian international Atiba Hutchinson is mostly used as a powerful central midfielder but can also play at full-back.

Solbakken prefers a 4-4-2, with fast-raiding wingers such as Libor Sionko to feed Nordstrand and Brazilian striker Ailton. Jesper Christiansen is a fine goalkeeper and Ulrik Laursen a strong centre-back.

## CSKA MOSCOW (RUS)

The 2005 UEFA Cup winners are experiencing an unexpected period of instability, which has forced coach Valeri Gazzayev to announce that he will step down at the end of the season. The three-times domestic champions finished only third last term and have been off the pace this time round. Star Brazilian striker Jo has left for Manchester City, compatriot Daniel Carvalho is on loan at Internacional and another Brazilian striker, Vagner Love, looks set to leave soon.


Smiling but going...Gazzayev

### THE COACH

Former Russia boss Valeri Gazzayev began his second spell with CSKA in 2003 and is the club's most successful coach.

### KEY PLAYER

Yuri Zhirkov effectively controlled the whole left wing at Euro 2008 with his pace, vision and passing.

CSKA often use three defenders, with Nigerian full-back Chidi Odia further forward on the right wing. Speedy Serbian midfielder Milos Krasic tends to move inside alongside young playmaker Alan Dzagoev.

CSKA MOSCOW

## DEBRECEN (HUN)

Debrecen, who won a hat-trick of domestic titles from 2005 and 2007, have more European experience than any other Hungarian team this decade, including creditable

Men v Boys...midfielder Olah

performances against Manchester United in the Champions League qualifiers in 2005. "Loki" lost their grip on the Hungarian title last term, partly because of a long-term injury to captain and midfielder Tamas Sandor and the winter transfer of talented youngster Balazs Dzudzsak to Ajax. They faced Young Boys of Switzerland in the second qualifying round.

### THE COACH

Andras Herczeg was assistant to title-winning coaches Attila Supka and Miroslav Beranek, taking the reins himself last November.

### KEY PLAYER

Brazil-born midfielder Leandro de Almeida, now a naturalised Hungarian, has won the league title with both Ferencvaros and Debrecen.

Debrecen use a standard 4-4-2. Wily veteran striker Zsombor Kerekes plays slightly ahead of partner Gergely Rudolf. Former international Tibor Dombi offers width on the right of midfield.

DEBRECEN

## DEPORTIVO LA CORUNA (SPA)

Keep it up...Bravo

Depor were La Liga's best-performing side in the second half of last season, finishing 11th after a disastrous start to book a place in the InterToto Cup. Coach Miguel Angel Lotina was on the verge of the sack before he engineered the revival with tactics – notably the use of a five-man defence – that made Depor very hard to beat. Fabricio Coloccini has moved to Newcastle leaving a hole in defence, but Depor made some good buys, notably Mexican striker Omar Bravo, ex-Valencia and Atletico Madrid forward Mista and goalkeeper Daniel Aranzubia from Athletic Bilbao.

### THE COACH

Much-travelled Miguel Angel Lotina has plenty experience of relegation scraps but little of European competition.

### KEY PLAYER

Veteran midfielder Juan Carlos Valeron will play a crucial role – if he can stay fit.

Depor's style, with five at the back, is not pretty but proved effective last season. Riki can play as the lone striker (Bodipo, Adrian and Omar are alternatives) or as a winger.

DEPORTIVO LA CORUNA

## DINAMO BUCHAREST (ROM)

Dinamo's board of directors is split on many things but this summer it was united on the need to retain international goalkeeper Bogdan Lobont as the club set out to meet an ambitious target: the UEFA Cup semi-finals. To help with this plan, the club, who finished fourth in the Romanian League last season, recruited former striker Marius Niculae from Inverness. However, they lost key central defender Stefan Radu to Lazio.

Title hat-trick...Rednic

### THE COACH

Mircea Rednic has won three league titles and two cups in the past six years with Rapid and Dinamo.

### KEY PLAYER

Goalkeeper Bogdan Lobont often comes to the team's rescue, and he is also adept at launching attacks with his kicks and throws.

Dinamo have strong attacking options, with three out-and-out strikers (Florin Bratu, Ionel Danciulescu and Marius Niculae) competing for two places.

DINAMO BUCHAREST

## DJURGARDENS (SWE)

These are desperate times for the Stockholm club, having just endured a two-month spell without a league win, and the priority for beleaguered coach Siggi Jonsson is to keep clear of the relegation zone

Seasoned performer...Kusi-Asare (left)

rather than dream of success in Europe. Djurgardens' plight is strange given that their squad is one of the strongest in the domestic league. Goalkeeper Dembo Touray is an imposing figure, the back four have plenty of vigour, and attacking players such as Mattias Jonson and Jones Kusi-Asare are seasoned performers. A fightback is expected.

### THE COACH

Siggi Jonsson, 42, is a former Icelandic international who played for Arsenal and Sheffield Wednesday.

### KEY PLAYER

Former international Mattias Jonson still gives 100 per cent either as a midfielder or up front.

Both full-backs, Patrik Haginge and German Jan Tauer, love to push forward. Stoppers Markus Johanesson and Toni Kuivasto are both strong but sometimes fallible against quick forwards.

DJURGARDENS

## DNIPRO (UKR)

Former Soviet Union star Oleh Protasov took the reins at Dnipro, backed by banking billionaire Ihor Kolomoysky, in 2006. Things started well enough: Protasov built a strong side who finished fourth in the Ukrainian League in 2007. But last season things started to unravel. New recruits, including ex-Russian international Rolan Gusev and Argentinian Osmar Ferreira, failed to make an impact and the team were lucky to finish fourth again. Protasov's resignation was not accepted by the club, though with no players signed this summer his days seem numbered.

Home run...Protasov

### THE COACH

Oleh Protasov won the Greek League with Olympiakos and has also had spells in Japan and Romania. Dnipro are his hometown club.

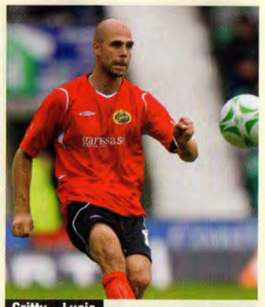
### KEY PLAYER

Midfielder Serhii Nazarenko is a natural organiser and has a strong, precise shot.

Protasov has ditched the use of a sweeper in favour of a flat back four. Skipper Oleh Shelaiev is the deepest-lying midfielder, though Ruslan Rotan and Nazarenko also have holding roles.

DNIPRO

## ELFSBORG (SWE)


Gritty...Lucic

Elfsborg, the Swedish champions in 2006, have been one of the most consistent sides in Sweden this season, having finished fourth last year. Defensively, the team has excelled, with gritty Teddy Lucic and under-rated stopper Andreas Augustsson looking unpenetrable. In attack, little winger Stefan Ishizaki has wooed the fans. The biggest concern for the club from Boras in western Sweden is how to keep hold of their best players. Goalkeeper Johan Wiland has already agreed to join FC Copenhagen after this season.

### THE COACH

Magnus Haglund is one of Sweden's best young coaches. Formerly a goalkeeper with Halmstads.

### KEY PLAYER

Johan Wiland is an agile shot-stopper whose excellent form earned him a place in Sweden's Euro 2008 squad.

Veteran Anders Svensson dominates the midfield and, like Ishizaki, is a free-kick specialist, but he's also notoriously injury-prone. Lasse Nilsson, on loan from Saint-Etienne, is the quick hare up front.

ELFSBORG

## EVERTON (ENG)

Everton showed their potential in last season's UEFA Cup campaign but it ended in frustration, going out on penalties to Fiorentina in the last 16. There has also been frustration at the limited activity in the summer transfer market, with the delayed sale of Andy Johnson to Fulham holding up the release of funds to bring in new players. Everton's squad is still too small for them to break into the Premiership top four and challenge in Europe. The situation has not been helped by the departure of chief executive Keith Wyness.

### THE MANAGER

David Moyes, the Premier League's third longest-serving manager, spent the summer at loggerheads with the board about transfer funds.

Creating link...Cahill

### KEY PLAYER

Australian attacking midfielder Tim Cahill plays a crucial role, linking with the lone striker.

Johnson's sale to Fulham was a clear sign that Moyes plans to persist with a 4-5-1 formation. Nigerian Yakubu Aiyegbeni operates as the lone striker, assisted by Cahill from midfield.

EVERTON

## FEYENOORD (HOL)

Feyenoord won the Dutch Cup to qualify for the UEFA Cup. But the demanding fans want more success than that. The first stones of the rebuilding job were laid last summer with the signing of quality players such as Roy Makaay and Giovanni Van Bronckhorst. This summer former top scorer Jon Dahl Tomasson has returned. However, Feyenoord have missed out on the domestic play-offs for the Champions League for two seasons running and it's debatable whether new coach Gertjan Verbeek can succeed where new Holland coach Bert Van Marwijk failed.

### THE COACH

Gertjan Verbeek has taken charge after Heerenveen surprisingly didn't give him a new contract despite good results.

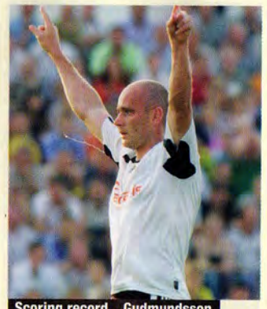
### KEY PLAYER

Giovanni Van Bronckhorst is an experienced skipper who provides balance to the team.

Balancing act...Van Bronckhorst

Verbeek prefers 4-3-3 but with such strikers as Makaay and Tomasson and few wingers, a 4-4-2 is a better option. He certainly won't play Van Marwijk's 4-5-1 waiting game. Verbeek wants the team to put pressure on defences early on.

## FH (ICE)


Scoring record...Gudmundsson

FH have been Iceland's most successful team of the past five years, with a hat-trick of league titles from 2004 to 2007 and triumph in the Cup last term. Their most notable European scalp to date was Dunfermline after a dramatic win in the 2004-05 UEFA Cup. The 5-1 defeat of Grevenmacher in Luxembourg in this season's first qualifying round was the biggest ever away win by an Icelandic club in Europe.

### THE COACH

Heimir Gudjonsson is one of Iceland's most promising young coaches. He is in his first season in charge at FH, having succeeded Olafur Johannesson, now the national coach.

### KEY PLAYER

Tryggvi Gudmundsson is a vastly experienced international striker and joint holder of Iceland's league scoring record of 19 goals in 18 games.

FH play in a solid 4-3-3 formation and this season have shown adeptness at frustrating opponents for long periods then striking back on the counter-attack.

## GENT (BLG)

Gent, who qualified for the UEFA Cup as losing cup finalists (to Anderlecht), received a massive boost this summer when Michel Preud'homme, coach of champions Standard Liege, sensationally opted to sign up as successor to Norwegian Trond Sollied. It will be hard enough for Preud'homme to make Gent a force to be reckoned with in Belgium, let alone in the UEFA Cup. New faces include Costa Rican defender Roy Myrie (Alajuelense) and Brazilian centre-back Adriano Duarte (Mons).

### THE COACH

Michel Preud'homme, the former Belgian international keeper, led Standard Liege to the league title last season following a spell as the club's general manager.

### KEY PLAYER

Costa Rican Bryan Ruiz is a skilful striker who can also play in midfield.

Skilful...Ruiz

Preud'homme is likely to retain the 4-3-3 shape Gent used last term, though he has not ruled out the 4-4-2 that brought him so much success at Standard or a 5-3-2 for tough awaydays. He puts a premium on collective discipline.

## GRASSHOPPER (SWI)

Long gone are the days when the Hoppers were strong in Europe (they reached the UEFA Cup semi-finals in 1978). Their stock has been gradually falling since they claimed their last Swiss league title in 2003. Now, coach Hanspeter Latour, who returned to start a third spell last summer, has a largely young, inexperienced team that can look promising one moment and mediocre the next. They qualified for the UEFA Cup via the InterToto.

Regular goals...Bobadilla

### THE COACH

Hanspeter Latour failed to make an impact in the Bundesliga with Koln but is highly thought of in Switzerland, where he has also led Thun, Solothurn, Bade and Wil.

### KEY PLAYER

Raul Bobadilla is a young, raw-boned Argentinian striker who has scored regularly for Grasshopper. Previously at Concordia, Basle's second club.

These days Latour favours a 4-2-3-1, but many of the young players lack tactical discipline. The backbone of the side is keeper Eldin Jakupovic, centre-back Boris Smiljanic, holding midfielder Ricardo Cabanas and striker Bobadilla.

## GYOR (HUN)

A European campaign could not have come at a better time for provincial Gyor as they are in the process of constructing their new ETO Park stadium. The green-and-whites were outmuscled at home in the first leg of their UEFA Cup first qualifying round tie with Georgians Zestafoni, managing only a 1-1 draw. But they won the return 2-1 despite the absence of three key players, including internationals Zoltan Boor and Peter Stark. Gyor, twice Hungarian champions in the early 1980s, are now hoping that this unexpected success is the start of a major revival. They faced Stuttgart in the second qualifying round.

### THE COACH

Sandor Egervari is the most successful coach currently working in the Hungarian League.

### KEY PLAYER

Spiky-haired midfielder Zoltan Boor has been the main force behind the recent revival at Gyor.

Closing down...Gyor (green) v Stuttgart

Egervari's team play in a standard 4-4-2, with Peter Bajzat as the spearhead forward and Boor making incisive runs into the box. Veteran keeper Sasa Stevanovic is adept in a sweeper's role.

## HAJDUK SPLIT (CRO)

Hajduk, who qualified for the UEFA Cup as losing domestic cup finalists, changed coach four times last season and finished only fourth in the League. New, debutant coach Goran Vucevic is charged with ending Dinamo Zagreb's domestic dominance, and to this end he has reinforced the squad with young keeper Danijel Subasic (Zadar), playmaker Senijad Ibricic (Zagreb), and Australian international midfielder Josip Skoko (Wigan). However, Hajduk lost striker Ante Rukavina to Panathinaikos.

### THE COACH

At 37, Goran Vucevic is one of the youngest coaches in the Croatian League. He previously coached Hajduk's juniors and was Slaven Bilic's scout for the national team.

On the front line...forward Bartolovic

### KEY PLAYER

Centre-forward Nikola Kalinic scored 17 league goals last season and is already a full international at just 20.

Hajduk usually play with a midfield diamond, with Ibricic at the point. Vucevic prefers an attacking game but lacks a pacy front-man following Rukavina's departure.

## HAKA (FIN)

Quick winger...Innanen

Haka, Finnish league runners-up in 2007, have struggled financially in recent times and were even denied a licence to take part in the UEFA Cup until a boardroom shuffle gave them a new start. Under coach Olli Huttunen, the team have done well in the League despite a small squad and the fact that time finally seems to have caught up with Russian ace Valery Popovitch. Haka have not performed well in Europe in recent years but individuals such as winger Mikko Manninen or big South Africa-born midfielder Cheyne Fowler could catch the eye.

### THE COACH

Olli Huttunen, a former Finnish international keeper, has been at Haka for nearly 30 years as a player and coach.

### KEY PLAYER

Mikko Manninen is a nippy winger, reminiscent of Lionel Messi.

Jani Kauppila and Fowler form an effective pairing in central midfield, while Manninen and Mikko Innanen are quick wingers. Popovitch, who has a free role, no longer dictates the pace of the game as he used to.

## HAMBURG (GER)

The times are a-changing at Hamburg, with Dutchman Martin Jol taking the coaching reins from compatriot Huub Stevens and best player Rafael Van der Vaart, another Dutchman, moving to Real Madrid. The No 10 will be almost impossible to replace – he scored 12 and made 10 in the Bundesliga last term. But at

Grab your aspirin...Olic

least Jol will not need to tinker with the defence, which is solid. New striker Jonathan Pitroipa (from Freiburg) is a potential revelation.

### THE COACH

Martin Jol did a good job in his three years at Tottenham but was fired early last season. He was linked with Ajax and Birmingham but chose a new start in the Bundesliga.

### KEY PLAYER

Croat striker Ivica Olic is not top class technically but his energy, mobility and determination give defenders a 90-minute headache.

Jol insists on flexibility and wants his team equally comfortable in a 4-2-3-1 as a 4-4-2. The coach is also eyeing 4-3-3 as an alternative; this would feature Paolo Guerrero, Olic and Pitroipa in attack.

## HAPOEL KIRYAT SHMONA (ISR)

The club from the northernmost town in Israel qualified for the UEFA Cup after finishing third in their debut season in the Premier League. A lot of the credit for their success goes to coach Ran Ben Shimon, who has now left for bigger things at Maccabi Tel Aviv. The team will play their home European games in Haifa, almost 100km away, because their small ground does not meet UEFA criteria.

Getting a grip...midfielder Tsarfati

### THE COACH

Michel Dayan has had only a modest coaching career, which has been spent in the second division.

### KEY PLAYER

Defensive midfielder Abbas Suan is a former Israeli international and hero of Arab club Bnei Sakhnin, whom he left to join Kiryat Shmona at the start of last season.

Kiryat Shmona are likely to have a conservative, defence-minded approach because of their inexperience in Europe.

H KIRYAT SHMONA

## HAPOEL TEL AVIV (ISR)

Hapoel are one of Israel's most successful sides in Europe, having played in the UEFA Cup group stage twice, reaching the quarter-finals in 2003. They qualified for this season's edition as cup runners-up to champions Beitar Jerusalem. Hapoel have traditionally been good defensively but do not score many goals. The club appear to have regained stability under coach Eli Guttman, who took over midway through last season following a disastrous run under Guy Luzon.

### THE COACH

Eli Guttman demands discipline and usually produces teams with good tactical awareness, a strong defence and a well-organised attack.

### KEY PLAYER

The ability of midfielder Gil Vermouth to build moves and create chances will be crucial to Guttman's plans.

Very good No 1...Enyeama

Hapoel line up in a 4-4-2. They have one of the best keepers in the Israeli League in Nigerian international Vincent Enyeama, and he gives confidence to the defence.

HAPOEL TEL AVIV

## HEERENVEEN (HOL)

Leadership potential...Pranjic

The Frisian club played some of the best football in the Dutch League last season as they finished fifth and went on to book their UEFA Cup place through the domestic play-offs. But despite the good results, the board decided not to renew the contract of coach Gertjan Verbeek, replacing him with Norwegian Trond Sollied from Gent. Also, Heerenveen have once again lost their best players, with Afonso Alves and Miralem Sulejmani moving to Middlesbrough and Ajax respectively.

### THE COACH

Trond Sollied is renowned for getting his teams to play attacking football and giving the players a lot of responsibility.

### KEY PLAYER

Croatian winger Danijel Pranjic should assume leadership following the departure of Heerenveen's big guns.

Sollied will use a 4-3-3. Up front, Gerald Sibon is the target man, with Bonaventure Kalou and Paulo Henrique out wide. Defender Michael Dingsdag can also play in midfield.

HEERENVEEN

## HERTHA BERLIN (GER)

Hertha finished in a far-from-impressive 10th place in the Bundesliga last term and qualified for the UEFA Cup only through the fair play route. They have been dreadfully short of creativity and dynamism in midfield, prompting the signing of Brazilian Cicero from Fluminense. The back-line, built around the Swiss Steve Von Bergen and Croat Josip Simunic, is well-equipped to take the hard knocks.

### THE COACH

Ex-Servette and Toulouse midfield general Lucien Favre has found German football a hard nut to crack since joining Hertha from Zurich a year ago.

Up on his own...Pantelic

### KEY PLAYER

Full-back or central defender Arne Friedrich was considered Germany's weakest link at the 2006 World Cup but is now rehabilitated after a good Euro 2008.

Favre favours a 4-4-1-1 with a flat midfield four. Brazilian Raffael plays slightly behind lone Serb striker Marko Pantelic, the one competent finisher at the club. Plan B is to go 3-5-2.

HERTHA BERLIN

## HONKA (FIN)

Honka, the 2007 Finnish cup runners-up, raised eyebrows by selling two of their best young players to Swedish clubs – stopper Hannu Patronen (Helsingborgs) and keeper Tomi Maanoja (AIK). But there are positives. Big forward Hermanni Vuorinen has shown glimpses of his old form of late, and skipper and right-back Ville Jalasto, midfielder Joel Perovuo and striker Aleksander Kokko offer lots of potential. Honka, from Espoo on the south coast, play a neat passing game, in contrast to the usual long-ball tactics in the domestic league.

### THE COACH

Mika Lehkosuo is one of the most positive young Finnish coaches. He played as a midfielder for HJK Helsinki and Perugia.

Potential...Jalasto

### KEY PLAYER

Hermanni Vuorinen was league top scorer in 2006, even though he left for Norway mid-season. He rejoined Honka at the start of this season.

Rami "Rambo" Hakanpaa plays in the midfield holding role. The full-backs, especially Hannu Haarala (ex-Heerenveen), love to push forward. Vuorinen and Kokko are both big, fast forwards and make surging runs.

HONKA

## INTERBLOCK (SLN)

Interblock, the Slovenian Cup holders, are embarking on their first European campaign and do not have great expectations. Their prospects were hardly helped when coach Dragan Skocic resigned just before the team's second qualifying round first leg against Hertha Berlin, saying the players were against him after a poor start to the domestic season. The team are inexperienced and they are also having to play home games in Celje because their new stadium in Ljubljana is still under construction.

### THE COACH

Italian Alberto Bigon, the emergency replacement for Skocic, has spent much of his coaching career in his homeland, including spells at Napoli and Perugia. Most recently he led Swiss side Sion.

### KEY PLAYER

New signing Dario Zahora was league top scorer with 22 goals for champions Domzale last season.

Emergency replacement...Bigon

Interblock usually play 4-4-2 but 4-1-3-2 is also an option. Keeper Matjaz Rozman is the key man in the normally rock-solid defence, which has been further strengthened with the signing of Dejan Grabic from Domzale.

INTERBLOCK

## KALMAR (SWE)

Watch it...midfielder Rydstrom (right)

Kalmar are not among Sweden's mightiest clubs but they are a shining example of what careful, patient planning can do. They were runners-up in the League last season and could go one better this year. The club's strategy has been to buy cheap imports, mainly from Brazil, and mix them with home-grown youngsters such as the Elm brothers, Rasmus, David and Viktor. However, economic realities have hit home at the Smaland club. Playmaker Cesar Santin, the pick of the Brazilian bunch, has been sold to FC Copenhagen, while Viktor Elm will leave for Heerenveen in the winter.

### THE COACH

Nanne Bergstrand is one of Sweden's most respected coaches and has a keen analytical mind.

### KEY PLAYER

Towering midfielder Viktor Elm is a hard worker with very good tactical sense.

Kalmar are a physically strong team who play with a direct, no-frills style and are quite difficult to break down. Up front, sharp-shooting Patrik Ingelsten is often the danger man. Kalmar can be a handful at set-pieces.

KALMAR

## KAYSERISPOR (TUR)

Results last season – a fifth-place league finish and victory in the Cup – plus a swanky new stadium point to a club on the up. But will Kayserispor be able to maintain such high standards after losing many key players, including top scorer Gokhan Unal, strike partner Leonardo and keeper Dimitar Ivankov? Newcomers include Nigeria striker Julius Aghahowa and Cameroon midfielder or full-back Salomon Olembe, neither of whom made the grade with Wigan in recent spells.

Cup kings...Kayserispor

### THE COACH

Tolunay Kafkas was a hard-nosed defender for Turkey, Trabzonspor and Galatasaray in the 1990s and brings the same single-mindedness and aggression to his role as boss.

### KEY PLAYER

Mehmet Topuz is very good at right-back, exceptional in midfield and the hottest property in the country right now.

Kafkas has assembled a team far greater than the sum of its parts. The 4-1-2-2-1 system he favours is dependent on a finely-tuned rearguard, dynamic forward movement and total commitment.

KAYSERISPOR

## LECH POZNAN (POL)

Lech are five-times Polish champions and have the highest average attendance (16,000) in the country. Their target is to reach the UEFA Cup group stage and, with that in mind, the board gave coach Franciszek Smuda the money to reinforce the squad this summer. The most important signings included Colombian central defender Manuel Arboleda (Zaglebie Lubin) and Bosnian attacking midfielder Semir Stilic (Zeljeznicar).

Lights on, lots at home...Lech stadium

### THE COACH

Franciszek Smuda has won the Polish League three times (with Widzew Lodz twice and Wisla Krakow) and led Widzew to the Champions League group stages in 1996, the last time a Polish club managed it.

### KEY PLAYER

Manuel Arboleda is an uncompromising defender and particularly strong in the air.

Smuda wants his team to play fast, attacking football but has built a solid defence to base it on. The coach is not averse to changing tactics mid-game, switching from 4-5-1 to 4-4-2 or 4-3-3 as conditions dictate.

LECH POZNAN

## LEGIA WARSAW (POL)

Legia, last season's league runners-up and cup winners, traditionally have high aspirations. A season is deemed a success only if the team win the league title, and they have

Cup run...Legia win the trophy

done so eight times, a Polish record. Unfortunately, Legia still have problems with their fans. Last year, the club were expelled from the InterToto Cup after hooligans battled with police during a tie against Vetra in Lithuania. The club's biggest signing of the summer was playmaker Maciej Iwanski from Zaglebie Lubin for £500,000, a domestic record.

### THE COACH

Jan Urban formerly led the youth and reserve teams of Spain's Osasuna, where he was also a player.

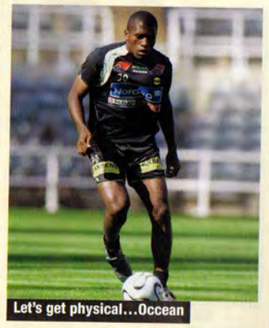
### KEY PLAYER

Brazil-born midfielder Roger Guerreiro has excellent technical skills. He played for Poland at Euro 2008 having received citizenship in the spring.

Urban not only played and coached in Spain but also views Spanish football as a perfect model and even has three Spaniards in the squad. He prefers a fast-passing game in which the central midfielders are crucial.

LEGIA WARSAW

## LILLESTROM (NOR)


Let's get physical...Occean

Lillestrom, the Norwegian cup holders, started this season with high hopes but have been trailing along at the bottom of the League. Coach Tom Nordlie was fired and assistants Erland Johnsen and Frode Grodaas took over. After some initial problems the team started winning again, courtesy of goals from Olivier Occean and Arild Sundgot. The defence is also much improved, with centre-back Frode Kippe marshalling effectively. The crisis is not over for Lillestrom but the team are playing good football as the European campaign kicks off.

### THE COACH

Former internationals Erland Johnsen (Bayern Munich and Chelsea) and Frode Grodaas (Chelsea) are co-coaches.

### KEY PLAYER

Canadian striker Olivier Occean is in his third season at Lillestrom. His physical strength and ability make him a fine target man.

Former coach Nordlie favoured a 4-3-3 system but the current bosses play 4-4-2. Occean and Sundgot are the strike partnership. The team are particularly strong at set-pieces.

LILLESTROM

## LITEX LOVECH (BUL)

In 2005-06, Lovech reached the last 16 of the UEFA Cup. Now, the target for the Bulgarian cup winners is the group stage. Israeli side Hapoel Kiryat Shmona were the obstacle in the second qualifying round. New coach Stanimir Stoilov has a strong European pedigree, having taken Levski Sofia to the UEFA Cup quarter-finals, the best performance by a Bulgarian side in Europe, and guided them into the Champions League group stage. There have been few

Hapoel hold-up...midfielder Bertin (right)

player changes. Serbian Neboysha Yelenkovich and Stanislav Genchev left; keeper Urosh Golubovich (Lokomotiv Sofia) and defender Peter Zanev (Celta Vigo) arrived.

### THE COACH

Stanimir Stoilov had four successful years with Levski but was dismissed two games from the end of last term.

### KEY PLAYER

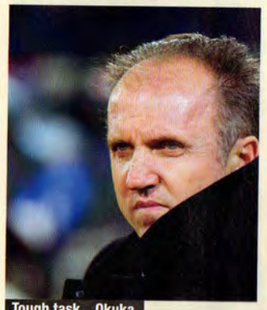
Left-sided defender Mihail Venkov is a Bulgarian international.

Lovech play a 4-4-2. Keeper Todor Todorov faces strong competition from new signing Golubovich. There is a strong Brazilian influence in midfield with Tom and Dudu.

LITEX LOVECH

## LOKOMOTIV SOFIA (BUL)

Lokomotiv Sofia have reached the UEFA Cup first round proper in each of the past two seasons. In 2006-07, they exited only on away goals to Feyenoord. Last season, when they finished third in the


Tough task...Okuka

Bulgarian League, they lost to Rennes. These successes were achieved under coach Stefan Grozdanov, who has now been replaced by Serb Dragan Okuka. The new coach faces a tough task without the departed Serbian keeper Urosh Golubovich, midfielders Marcho Dafchev and Malin Orachev, and defender Diyan Donchev.

### THE COACH

Dragan Okuka was a star of Bosnian side Velez Mostar in the 1970s and early 80s.

### KEY PLAYER

Central defender Georgi Markov is 36 and his great experience will be vital.

At the back, Markov is sweeper alongside stopper Darko Savich. All Lokomotiv's attacking options are foreign – Macedonian Zoran Baldovaliev and two Serbs: Sasha Antunovich and Vladimir Dzhilas.

LOKOMOTIV SOFIA

## MACCABI NETANYA (ISR)

Netanya, the Israeli league runners-up for the past two seasons, have very little European experience. They were a great club in the 1970s and early 80s but that was before Israeli clubs competed in Europe. The club from the resort city on the Mediterranean coast have new ambitions. Netanya were recently acquired by German Daniel Jammer, who has imported compatriot coach Lothar Matthaus. The World Cup winner has already faced criticism from the players about the rigorous training regime. Netanya faced Cherno More of Bulgaria in the second qualifying round.

Cherno challenge...defender Maabi (front)

### THE COACH

Lothar Matthaus' record as a coach is quite ordinary when compared to his playing record.

### KEY PLAYER

Midfielder Barukh Dego, who has joined from Hapoel Tel Aviv, has European experience with Maccabi Tel Aviv.

Under previous coaches Netanya often played with an open, attacking style. It is not clear yet whether Matthaus will change that.

MACCABI NETANYA

## MANCHESTER CITY (ENG)

Vital know-how...Hamann

City qualified for the UEFA Cup by an unlikely route – via the fair play rankings, as the English top flight's fifth least dirty team. But expectations are high after they spent a club record £19million on Brazilian forward Jo and, crucially, persuaded captain and defender Richard Dunne to stay. Two big questions remain, however. How will the stars of last season – Elano and Martin Petrov, signed by previous manager Sven Goran Eriksson – fare under Mark Hughes? And how committed is controversial Thai owner Thaksin Shinawatra?

### THE MANAGER

Former Manchester United striker Mark Hughes made his mark as a manager by creating a highly competitive Blackburn side.

### KEY PLAYER

Dietmar Hamann does not play every game these days but his European know-how will be vital.

With the arrival of Jo, City are expected to switch from using a lone striker to a forward partnership in a 4-4-2 formation. Valeri Bojinov's return from long-term injury gives another option in attack.

MANCHESTER CITY

## MARITIMO (POR)

This is Maritimo's sixth participation in the UEFA Cup and they have never progressed past the second round. But the Madeira-based club have achieved some impressive results at home against big European names, beating Rangers and Leeds and drawing with Juventus. New Brazilian coach Lori Sandri has big shoes to fill following the successful stint of compatriot Sebastiao Lazaroni, and he is relying on a large Brazilian contingent to get the job done.

### THE COACH

Lori Sandri has experience working in the Middle East and Asia but is making his debut in European football.

Head lad...midfielder Olberdam

### KEY PLAYER

Veteran playmaker Bruno has lost some of his energy and speed but still has enough quality to pull the strings in midfield.

Maritimo have a Brazilian backbone and a Brazilian coach, so are likely to play with a slow tempo, relying on short passes to break down the opposition.

MARITIMO

## METALIST (UKR)

The team from Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city, have risen rapidly over the past three seasons, thanks to the backing of industrialist billionaire Olexander Yaroslavsky and clever work of coach Miron Markevich. The most important deals for the Steelers this summer were contract extensions for striker Marco Devic, defender Milan Obradovic and stopper Papa Gueye. Metalist, who have finished third in Ukraine two seasons running, are one of the country's best-supported clubs, with an average home gate of almost 15,000.

Family attacked...Markevich

### THE COACH

The experienced Miron Markevich quit hometown club Karpaty Lviv after a gang attack on his family.

### KEY PLAYER

Belgrade-born Marco Devic has changed position at Metalist, from holding midfielder to prolific forward, and taken Ukrainian citizenship.

Markevich likes to play with width, so full-backs Vitaliy Bordiyan and Seweryn Gancarczyk are encouraged to attack. Serhiy Valyaev and Valentin Slusar hold in midfield, allowing Edmar and Olexander Rykun to get forward.

## METALURGS LIEPAJA (LAT)

Metalurgs won the Latvian League in 2005 but lost out to Ventspils last term, meaning they had to settle for the UEFA Cup. They have been regulars in the competition in recent years, but have struggled to make progress. This summer, they parted company with two veterans of Latvia's Euro 2004 squad, Andrijs Rubins and Imants Bleidelis, but they can still call upon another, defender Dzintars Zirnis. They also have a rising star in their ranks, Antons Jemelins.

### THE COACH

Former West German international Rudiger Abramczik took charge recently, having previously had mixed fortunes in spells in Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria.

Mixed fortunes...Abramczik

### KEY PLAYER

Lithuanian international Tomas Tamosauskas is central to midfield operations.

Metalurgs are likely to use a 4-5-1 against stronger sides in Europe. Girts Karlsons, who scored twice against Glentoran in the first qualifying round, is the centre-forward.

## MIDTJYLLAND (DEN)

The club were created in 1999 from a merger of Herning and Ikast and have continued to flourish in the Danish top division. The Black Wolves finished runners-up last season, and a good start to the new Superliga campaign has boosted morale under rookie coach Thomas Thomasberg. This is Midtjylland's fourth UEFA Cup campaign but they have had little success so far. The club have a cosmopolitan squad, including several Nigerians.

### THE COACH

Thomas Thomasberg was assistant to Erik Rasmussen for four years before stepping up to take charge this summer at the age of 33.

### KEY PLAYER

US international Danny Califf is a strong centre-back, signed from Danish champions AaB Aalborg.

Midfield steel...Thygesen

The 4-3-3 formation is used to get the most from two speedy front-runners, Swedish teenager Ken Fagerberg and Nigerian teenager Baba Collins. George Florescu and Mikkel Thygesen provide steel in midfield.

## MILAN (ITA)

The fact that the 2007 Champions League winners are not in Europe's top club competition means their priority will be a good finish in Serie A

Paired up...Pato and Kaka

and a return to the Champions League next season. Nevertheless, Milan's pedigree, not to mention the presence of Ronaldinho, makes them UEFA Cup favourites. But there are doubts about the Brazilian's application and his ability to dovetail with compatriots Kaka and Alexandre Pato. Some of Milan's other big signings – keeper Christian Abbiati, defender Gianluca Zambrotta and midfielder Mathieu Flamini – could prove more effective.

### THE COACH

Carlo Ancelotti has stayed at the helm in the face of calls for his resignation after the failure to qualify for the Champions League.

### KEY PLAYER

Kaka remains the team's attacking heart despite Ronaldinho's arrival.

Can Ancelotti incorporate the three Brazilian attackers in the same formation? The injury to Italian international Marco Borriello, newly arrived from Genoa, makes it easier for the coach to at least try the trio.

## FC MOSCOW (RUS)

Coach Oleg Blokhin has been struggling to lift his side off the bottom of the Russian League, and the club's formerly strong Argentinian contingent is now reduced to two – forwards Hector Bracamonte and Maximiliano Lopez. It looks as if this will be the club's last appearance in European competition. FC Moscow, founded in 1997 to replace one half of Torpedo Moscow, are set to be re-merged with their former other half, now playing in the second division under the Torpedo name. The plan is for the new Torpedo to take FC Moscow's place in next year's Premier Liga.

Struggles...Blokhin

### THE COACH

Oleg Blokhin, the legendary USSR and Dynamo Kyiv striker, joined FC Moscow late last year. Led Ukraine to the last eight of the 2006 World Cup.

### KEY PLAYER

Belorussian keeper Yuri Zhevnov is very reliable.

Blokhin had a brilliant career as a striker but places big emphasis on solid defence. The midfield features some rising talents, such as Alexei Rebko, while the wingers play a crucial role in supplying the tall strikers.

## MOTHERWELL (SCO)

Last season was traumatic for Motherwell because of the death of captain Phil O'Donnell during a league game in December. But the tragedy galvanised the team in playing terms and they managed a creditable third-place finish to book their UEFA Cup place. Credit is also due to manager Mark McGhee, who has helped re-establish Motherwell as one of the best teams to watch in Scotland. However, he has had a frustrating time this summer, with no cash to spend on transfers.

### THE MANAGER

Mark McGhee, back in Scotland after spending his entire coaching career in England, has revived Motherwell but surprisingly turned down an approach from Hearts this summer.

### KEY PLAYER

David Clarkson now wears the No 10 shirt of O'Donnell, his uncle. Voted club player of the season for 2007-08.

Player of the season...Clarkson

McGhee favours 4-4-2 but experimented with 3-5-2 against European opposition during pre-season games, with full-back Steven Hammell pushing into midfield. Either way, the manager will advocate a passing game.

## NANCY (FRA)

Holding up...Fortune

Nancy were pipped for a Champions League place by Marseille when they lost at home to Rennes on the last day of the season. It was rough on the unfashionable club after a solid campaign. Nancy's great strength was their defence but this is now considerably weakened after the departure of Sebastien Puygrenier to Zenit St Petersburg. Standards will be higher in the UEFA Cup, and with a distinct lack of firepower (Nancy scored just 44 goals in 38 league games last term), they will find it hard to get their noses in front in Europe and close the game out.

### THE COACH

Uruguayan Pablo Correa, 41, played for Nancy for five years before taking the coaching job, his first, in 2002.

### KEY PLAYER

Marc-Antoine Fortune is a decent striker who holds the ball up well and brings other players into the game. Needs to up his strike rate.

Correa constantly switches from 4-1-2-3 to 4-4-2 and back again depending on the opposition. Nancy are always well-drilled and hungry for work, which should help them hold their own. But they lack individual ability.

## NAPOLI (ITA)

The Napoli revival continues. Relegated from Serie A in 2001 and declared bankrupt in 2004, the club are back in the UEFA Cup – which they won in 1989 with Diego Maradona – via the InterToto Cup. Last season, they finished eighth on their return to Serie A. This summer, they have held on to three key players: Argentinian forward Ezequiel Lavezzi, Slovakian midfielder Marek

Maradona comparison...Lavezzi

Hamsik and Uruguayan midfielder Walter Gargano. They have added another Argentinian forward, German Denis (from Independiente), and will be especially hard to beat at home.

### THE COACH

Much-travelled Edoardo Reja guided Napoli back up to Serie A in 2006-07 and to a creditable eighth-place finish last term.

### KEY PLAYER

Argentinian forward Ezequiel Lavezzi has even been compared to Maradona by the locals.

Napoli are one of a handful of Italian teams that have reverted to a back three. Wing-back Christian Maggio is an exciting new addition on the right flank, while Lavezzi is a bundle of trouble in attack

## NEC NIJMEGEN (HOL)

Air power...Olsson

Halfway through last season NEC were still in the relegation zone but they were the best-performing team in the second half of the campaign and their efforts were rewarded with a UEFA Cup ticket. "Things went so well that there was a time I knew we wouldn't lose," declared coach Mario Been, who has been linked with a move to former club Feyenoord. It's hard to see NEC repeating their form in 2008-09, however, as strikers Brett Holman and Jeremain Lens have moved to AZ.

### THE COACH

As a coach, Mario Been has been the opposite of the player he was at Feyenoord, where his lack of professionalism and love of practical jokes meant he never fulfilled his talent as a midfielder.

### KEY PLAYER

Swedish central defender Jonas Olsson is strong in the air and could be heading to a better club soon.

Been has a dilemma. After switching from 4-4-2 to 4-3-3 last season his team remained unbeaten in 17 matches. But the loss of Lens and Holman means it's hard to stick with the system. The chances are the coach will revert to 4-4-2.

## NORDSJAELLAND (DEN)

The club, previously called Farum after the northern suburb of Copenhagen in which they are based, were renamed in 2003 to try to widen their appeal (Nordsjaelland means north Zealand, the island on which Copenhagen is situated). The ploy has worked, and the team have been consistent performers in the Superliga. This is only the second time Nordsjaelland have

Eye for goal...Bernburg (right)

appeared in Europe and they qualified only on a fair play ticket but opponents shouldn't underestimate the spirited, energetic team. They have no real stars, but Canadian midfielder Issey Nakajima-Farran is a delightful dribbler.

### THE COACH

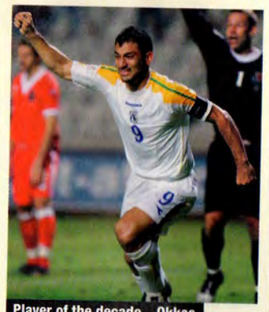
Morten Wieghorst, the former Celtic and Denmark midfielder, has been in charge for two years.

### KEY PLAYER

Danish Under-21 international Martin Bernburg has a real eye for goal.

Nordsjaelland play in a standard 4-4-2 formation and have a conservative approach. Swedish central defender Johnny Lundberg leads by example. Compatriot Andreas Dahl has become a key figure in midfield.

## OMONIA (CYP)


Player of the decade...Okkas

Last season was calamitous for Omonia, Cyprus's most popular club. They finished only third in the League, 20 points behind champions Anorthosis, and employed three coaches – Dragan Okuka, Giorgos Savvidis and incumbent Nedim Dudic. New chairman Miltiades Neophytou has rung the changes, releasing 15 players and signing no fewer than 17. Among the newcomers are Cyprus captain and striker Ioannis Okkas (Celta Vigo), national team left-winger Stathis Aloneftis (Energie Cottbus) and promising attacker Demitris Christofi (ENP).

### THE COACH

Bosnian Nedim Dudic was previously assistant to Savvidis at Omonia and did well enough in the top job in the final stages of last season to keep the post.

### KEY PLAYER

Nimble striker Ioannis Okkas is the best Cypriot player of the decade. Spent eight years in Greece and Spain.

Everything depends on how well the trio of attacking midfielders support lone striker Okkas. Brazilian Clayton directs most of the traffic, ably supported by captain Costas Kaiafas, whose nominal position is quite deep but who regularly pushes forward.

## PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN (FRA)

Paris Saint-Germain are in the UEFA Cup thanks to a League Cup Final victory over Lens, who went on to be relegated. The same fate nearly befell PSG – they stayed up with just three points to spare. Coach Paul Le Guen knows he'll have to do a lot better this time around and has reinforced his side well with the signings of midfielders Ludovic Giuly and Claude Makelele and striker Mateja Kezman. Their experience will surely increase PSG's chances of making UEFA Cup progress.

### THE COACH

Paul Le Guen has struggled during his time at PSG. The former Lyon and Rangers boss is a reserved character who suffers because he's not media-friendly.

Coup...Makelele

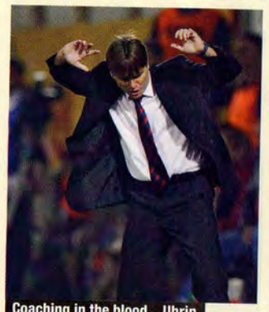
### KEY PLAYER

PSG have pulled off a great coup in bringing Claude Makelele back home. If his legs hold out he'll drag the team up by the bootstraps.

PSG were unbalanced last season, with little attacking threat coming down the right side. That is the main reason for bringing Giuly on board, as a counterpoint to Jerome Rothen on the left.

## POLI TIMISOARA (ROM)

After four years of scandal, Poli, from Timisoara in western Romania, have re-emerged to challenge once again for honours. Under a new owner, oil magnate Marian Iancu, the club are targetting the group stage of the UEFA Cup. Key to the recent success has been the signing of defensive midfielder Dan Alexa, from Dinamo Bucharest, and creative midfielder Artavazd Karamyan, from Rapid Bucharest.


Coaching in the blood...Uhrin

### THE COACH

Dusan Uhrin Jnr is the son of the former Czech national coach, who steered the team to the Euro 96 Final.

### KEY PLAYER

Armenian international Artavazd Karamyan is the team's main schemer.

The team's play centres on supplying striker Gigel Bucur, who scored 16 goals last season. Midfielders Dan Alexa and Karamyan are the team's most influential players.

## PORTSMOUTH (ENG)

Portsmouth have been one of the success stories of English football in recent seasons, winning last season's FA Cup and punching above their weight in the League. But this is their debut European campaign so they're entering the unknown.

European experience...Crouch

Manager Harry Redknapp has made some shrewd transfer deals, rehabilitating the flagging careers of keeper David James, defender Sol Campbell, midfielder Lassana Diarra and striker Jermain Defoe. Peter Crouch is the latest to try his luck on the south coast.

### THE MANAGER

Harry Redknapp's cheeky-chappy persona hides a sharp football brain. Should be a contender to be the next England manager.

### KEY PLAYER

Peter Crouch, Portsmouth's record signing at £11million, left Liverpool in search of regular football. His European experience will be vital.

Last season, Nwankwo Kanu played alone up front; Crouch is likely to play a similar role this time round. Defoe would partner the tall striker if Redknapp opts for 4-4-2.

## QUEEN OF THE SOUTH (SCO)

Second level Queen of the South provided one of the great stories of last season in Scotland when reaching the Cup Final, in which they gave Rangers a run for their money. The consolation for defeat for the Dumfries-based side was a first taste of European football with entry to the UEFA Cup. Manager Gordon Chisholm has created an enterprising team on a limited budget.

### THE MANAGER

Former Dundee United boss Gordon Chisholm took over in summer 2007.

### KEY PLAYER

The goals of playmaker Stephen Dobbie were crucial in last season's cup run.

Crucial goals...Dobbie

Chisholm favours an attacking formation, with Dobbie deployed behind two forwards. This may prove too gung-ho as the Doonhamers try to find their feet in Europe.

## RACING SANTANDER (SPA)

Racing are preparing to take part in their first European campaign but lack the resources to compete on both domestic and continental fronts. Last season they finished sixth in La Liga, their best placing, but coach Marcelino has left for relegated

Another campaign...Lopez

Zaragoza and there have been few signings. Portuguese defender Ze Antonio is one arrival, from Monchengladbach, and Argentinian defender Ezequiel Garay may remain on loan after being signed by Real Madrid. All in all, new coach Juan Ramon Muniz is likely to struggle to maintain the club's momentum.

### THE COACH

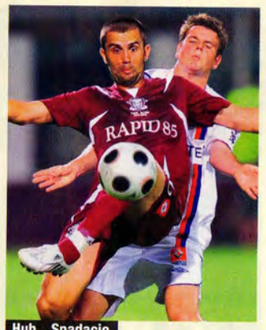
Juan Ramon Muniz, 40, made his name with Malaga.

### KEY PLAYER

Midfielder Jorge Lopez is an experienced campaigner, previously with Villarreal and Valencia.

Muniz favours a straight 4-4-2. His toughest decision is who to play alongside veteran striker Pedro Munitis. Mohamed Tchite is likely to get the nod over Ebi Smolarek.

## RAPID BUCHAREST (ROM)


Hub...Spadacio

Rapid's close season was overshadowed by the takeover by Jordanian businessman Fathi Taher, who bought the club from George Copos and immediately came into conflict with key players about money. New Portuguese coach Jose Peseiro responded by excluding ringleaders Marius Constantin and Danut Coman from the squad, which in turn provoked protests from the fans. Nevertheless, Rapid look potential domestic title challengers, and Peseiro has set an ambitious target – to win the League and Cup and reach the Champions League group stage next season.

### THE COACH

Jose Peseiro is a tough disciplinarian who has rung the changes since joining from Panathinaikos.

### KEY PLAYER

Brazilian midfielder Juliano Spadacio is quick, skilful and determined, and likely to be the hub of the team.

Peseiro has set Rapid up to play with an attacking style, with the powerful Pierre Boya the lone striker, supported by the more technical Joao Paulo, Julio Cesar and Spadacio.

## RED STAR BELGRADE (SER)

Serbia's most successful club (European Cup and World Club Cup winners in 1991) are experiencing an unprecedented period of turbulence, on and off the pitch. New coach Zdenek Zeman is the sixth since summer 2006, and while his reported annual salary of £400,000 is a sign of

Italian angle...Zeman

the club's ambition to achieve success, there are questions about the quality of the team. Many of the key players have left this summer, while others (notably Segundo Castillo and Ognjen Koroman) may yet join them. None of the new signings seem to be genuine replacements.

### THE COACH

Zdenek Zeman, a Czech with Italian citizenship, has spent virtually his whole coaching career in Italy, with Lazio, Roma and Napoli among others.

### KEY PLAYER

Nenad Milijas is a versatile, left-footed midfielder; a good team player with a powerful shot.

Zeman insists on a 4-3-3, with a quick, fluent passing game and attacking one-touch play. The question is, does he have the players who can operate in such a system?




## RENNES (FRA)

Much-admired...Briand

Rennes squeezed into the UEFA Cup with a win on penalties (10-9) over Ukrainian outfit Tavriya in the InterToto Cup. Will they be able to make more of an impression in the more prestigious competition? Possibly, if new Ghanaian striker Asamoah Gyan and USA defender Carlos Bocanegra can find their feet quickly. However, Rennes have just lost their best player, defender John Mensah, to Lyon, and they look a little lightweight to go far in Europe.

### THE COACH

Guy Lacombe, who had a disastrous spell in charge of Paris Saint-Germain, is back in the big time and seems much happier as the kingpin at a provincial club than in the pressure-cooker atmosphere of the capital's flagship outfit.

### KEY PLAYER

Jimmy Briand is a much-admired striker who looks like staying with Rennes after stating his desire to join PSG.

Rennes will be relying on the speed of their two front men, Gyan and Briand, to get in behind defences and create opportunities. Lacombe has always tried to create neat, passing sides.

## ROSENBORG (NOR)

Rosenborg finished a disappointing fifth in the Norwegian League last season and qualified for the UEFA Cup via the InterToto Cup with a defeat of Holland's NAC Breda. The Trondheim club have an abundance of talent in midfield but need more firepower following the departure of Ivorian striker Yssouf Kone to CFR Cluj in Romania. Swedish international full-back Fredrik Stoor has also left, for Fulham, his parting shot a beautiful goal against NAC.

Knocking out NAC...midfielder Demidov

### THE COACH

Swede Erik Hamren took over in July after winning the Danish league title with AaB Aalborg. He has already stamped his mark on Rosenborg, who are fast-improving.

### KEY PLAYER

Per Ciljan Skjelbred is Rosenborg's diamond in midfield. He has been guided carefully since making his first-team breakthrough as a teenager in 2005.

The team traditionally play in a 4-3-3 formation but Hamren has made it clear he may use different systems. Rosenborg defend as a unit and usually make good use of their attacking full-backs and attacking midfielders.

## SAINT-ETIENNE (FRA)

Saint-Etienne are tasting European football again, but don't expect the sort of heroics we saw from the team of the 1970s. The 2008 model is very much a work in progress for coach Laurent Roussey – *Les Verts* have some interesting players (not least striker Bafetimbi Gomis), but there's still much to be done before they can be a European force. The addition of Japanese flyer Daisuke Matsui from Le Mans gives Saint-Etienne more attacking options, but it's hard to see them pulling up too many trees in the UEFA Cup.

### THE COACH

Laurent Roussey has been in charge since last year and surprised many pundits by assuredly leading *Les Verts* into Europe at the first time of asking with a fifth-place finish in Ligue 1.

### KEY PLAYER

Rugged Greek defender Efstathios Tavlaridis played a major part in the domestic success last season.

Rugged...Tavlaridis

Roussey knows the team need to get the ball up to Gomis as quickly as possible to pose a threat. Saint-Etienne are solid and steady but have few attacking options apart from the 23-year-old.

## SALZBURG (AUT)

Following two years of *catenaccio*-style soccer under Giovanni Trapattoni, the fans and club owner Dietrich Mateschitz craved a change. So the Red Bull energy drink tycoon hired Dutchman Co Adriaanse, who is renowned for his love of attacking

Strength and skill...Tchoyi

football. Austria's richest club have big goals: according to Adriaanse, Salzburg are aiming to win the League and the Cup and make their mark in Europe. For this reason, Mateschitz has persuaded the regional government not to reduce Salzburg's stadium capacity from 30,000, as was planned after Euro 2008.

### THE COACH

Co Adriaanse, who likes Dutch-style power football, has completely changed Salzburg's style and attitude.

### KEY PLAYER

New Nigerian signing Somen Tchoyi has emerged as the playmaker and offers physical strength as well as skill.

Adriaanse's side play attacking, creative, pacy football. They usually start out in a 4-3-2-1, but often actually play with three strikers, Louis Clement Ngwat-Mahop and Alexander Zickler joining centre-forward Marc Janko.

## SAMPDORIA (ITA)

Sampdoria were one of the surprise teams of last season's Serie A. They were in contention for the fourth Champions League spot for most of the campaign before dropping off in the last few weeks to finish sixth. Star of the highly competitive side was Real Madrid loanee Antonio Cassano, who has now joined Samp permanently. But the rest of the team is decidedly pedestrian, a fact underlined by the underwhelming

Revival...Cassano

summer signings – Lithuanian international Marius Stankevicius from Brescia and Daniele Dessena from relegated Parma.

### THE COACH

Former journeyman player Walter Mazzarri has proved himself a highly effective coach, first with Reggina and, since 2007, with Samp.

### KEY PLAYER

Antonio Cassano revived his career in Genoa just as it appeared to be heading for the rocks.

Mazzarri prefers a back three, with Stankevicius and Mirko Pieri used as wing-backs. Cassano is the main man and likely to be partnered up front by Claudio Bellucci. Emiliano Bonazzoli is a more physical alternative in attack.

## SEVILLA (SPA)

Pre-season win...Sevilla in Moscow

There have been so many changes over the past year that it's hard to make predictions about the new campaign. Sevilla have lost key midfielders Christian Poulsen (Juventus) and Seydou Keita (Barcelona) as well as flying full-back Daniel Alves (Barcelona). The main signings – Romaric N'Dri (Le Mans), Sebastien Squillaci (Lyon), Lautaro Acosta (Lanus) and Fernando Navarro (Mallorca) – suggest sporting director Monchi is still adept in the transfer market. And president Jose Maria del Nido is still a tough negotiator, as any clubs aiming to bid for striker Luis Fabiano will discover.

### THE COACH

Manolo Jimenez was promoted from within the club after Juande Ramos left for Tottenham last season.

### KEY PLAYER

Left-winger Diego Capel has been linked with Tottenham but does not want to move to England.

Jesus Navas and Diego Capel provide pace and trickery on the flanks as Brazilian Renato and new signing N'Dri patrol the centre. If Luis Fabiano is sold, Arouna Kone will take his place in attack.

## SIROKI BRIJEG (BOS)

The club went through considerable turbulence last season but the appointment of coach Ivan Katalinic should promote stability. Siroki Brijeg are the best organised and richest club in the Bosnian League. There is also now a distinctly Brazilian flavour, with five players in the squad. The team have a lot of experience and should challenge for the domestic title, but few are expecting them to go far in the UEFA Cup.

### THE COACH

Ivan Katalinic, who made his name at Hajduk Split, is a great tactician.

### KEY PLAYER

Hard-running captain Dalibor Silic operates on the left side, from where he helps out in defence but is also important in attacks.

Back and forward...Silic

Siroki Brijeg are a counter-attacking side who often line up in a 3-5-2, though Katalinic is keen on 4-5-1. In the latter formation, the striker role goes to Stanko Bubalo, who can create his own chances and put them away.

SIROKI BRIJEG

## SLAVEN BELUPO (CRO)

Dribbler...Vrucina

The Pharmaceuticals (Slaven are sponsored by a large drugs company) were the biggest surprise in the Croatian League last season, finishing second. Much of the credit for this goes to coach Krunoslav Jurcic, no longer in charge. There has also been a big change in the team, with forward Bojan Vrucina back from Germany, where he warmed the bench at Duisburg.

### THE COACH

Mile Petkovic, Jurcic's replacement, is one of Croatia's most experienced coaches, a strict disciplinarian with a reputation for developing players.

### KEY PLAYER

Bojan Vrucina, a quick, skilful dribbler, was the most promising young forward in Croatia a few years ago. He returned home to Slaven after an unsuccessful spell with Duisburg.

Playmaker Srebrenko Posavec has an important partnership with defensive midfielder Dalibor Poldrugac; together, they dictate the pace of the team. Forwards Vrucina and Asim Sehic are both very fast.

SLAVEN BELUPO

## SLOVAN LIBEREC (CZE)

Liberec qualified for the UEFA Cup as losing cup finalists but were one of the strongest teams in the League in the spring. The return of coach Ladislav Skorpil in October heralded a dramatic revival in their fortunes. Croatian forward Andrej Keric made a big impact, too, as did attacking midfielder Petr Papousek. The loss of Slovak international defender Peter Singlar to Wisla Krakow is a blow, as is the retirement of Euro 96 veteran Radek Bejbl. Otherwise, the squad is little changed.

Second time round...Skorpil

### THE COACH

Ladislav Skorpil is now in his second spell at Liberec, having stepped down to coach the Czech Under-21s two years after leading the club to the 2002 league title.

### KEY PLAYER

Croatian striker Andrej Keric made an immediate impact with Liberec after joining last winter from Cibalia, scoring six goals in 11 league games.

In central midfield, Jiri Bilek usually provides the brawn and Filip Dort the brain. Keric and Jan Nezmar appear to be the first-choice strike partnership, with Ondrej Smetana and Vitezslav Brozik waiting in the wings.

SLOVAN LIBEREC

## SPORTING BRAGA (POR)

Qualified for the UEFA Cup through the InterToto Cup following a disappointing seventh-place finish in the Portuguese League. Two coaches were fired during that campaign, and the new boss, Jorge Jesus, has been charged with taking "The Arsenal" into the top four in the League and the knockout stages of the UEFA Cup. Braga, who like to play attacking football, achieved the latter feat last season, gaining impressive victories over Parma and Red Star Belgrade and a draw against Bayern Munich.

### THE COACH

Well-travelled Jorge Jesus, in his first year at Braga, has a knack of making his sides exceed expectations.

Dozen goals...Linz

### KEY PLAYER

Austrian international forward Roland Linz scored 12 goals last season.

Braga line up in a 4-3-3, though Jesus could adopt 3-4-3 if the team are chasing the game. The wing play of Vandinho and Matheus will be crucial in either formation, to create chances for Linz.

SPORTING BRAGA



## ST PATRICK'S ATHLETIC (IRE)

The Saints have already surpassed themselves in Europe this season, their 1-0 win at Olimps of Latvia in the first qualifying round being their first away in continental competition. Liverpool-born defender Dave Rogers is back after a loan spell with Sporting Fingal and adds steel to the defence. USA-born Ryan Guy, the scorer in Riga, is a very busy player and one of the best headers in the League despite not being that tall. Pat's, who finished second to Drogheda in the League last season, have been sharing the lead with Bohemians this term.

### THE MANAGER

John McDonnell is no longer looking over his shoulder now Saints hero Brian Kerr, the former national team manager, has quit as director of football.

### KEY PLAYER

Keith Fahey, known as "Fats", is the darling of the Saints supporters.

Forward march...Quigley (left)

Saints play a straight 4-4-2. The key players in midfield are Guy and Fahey.

ST PATRICK'S ATHLETIC

## STABAEK (NOR)

Table toppers for the first half of the Norwegian season, Stabaek look set to go one better than last term's second-place finish. Brazilian Alanzinho, Swede Daniel Nannskog and Icelander Veigar Gunnarsson have been in great form. Newcomer

Gem...Alanzinho (right)

Pontus Farnerud (Sporting Lisbon) is expected to slot into central midfield. Stabaek are also preparing to open a splendid new stadium.

### THE COACH

Swede Jan Jonsson is in his fourth season with Stabaek following stints in Japan and Sweden.

### KEY PLAYER

Brazilian Alanzinho came to Stabaek in 2005 as an unpolished gem. His amazing pace and trickery have impressed everybody.

Nannskog and Gunnarsson form the strike partnership; Gunnarsson tends to drop into a deeper position. The team are adept at switching from fast counter-attacking football to play creatively through midfield.

STABAEK

## STURM GRAZ (AUT)

Storming start...Sturm beat Rapid

Coach Franco Foda has had to turn to young talent following the departure of several key players – Sebastian Prodl (to Werder Bremen), Klaus Salmutter (LASK Linz) and Thomas Kramer (Austria Wien). Foda has got the team playing attacking, one-touch football, and Sturm look as if they could mount a serious bid for the domestic league title – they kicked off the new campaign by beating champions Rapid Wien. But the squad lacks strength in depth.

### THE COACH

Franco Foda has developed from a rookie coach to top boss in the Austrian League. He has even been suggested as a candidate for the national team job.

### KEY PLAYER

Veteran striker and captain Mario Haas is the heart and soul of the team and a valuable goalscorer.

Sturm play in a classic 4-4-2. The experienced Samir Muratovic is more of a playmaker than an out-and-out forward and regularly swaps positions with the speedy wide man Marco Stankovic during the match.

STURM GRAZ

## STUTTGART (GER)

Stuttgart should have few defensive worries despite the departure of centre-back (and skipper) Fernando Meira to Galatasaray. Serdar Tasci is an in-house replacement for Meira, while the arrival of Germany keeper Jens Lehmann and Dutch hard man Khalid Boulahrouz further bolsters the rearguard. The club will breathe a huge sigh of relief if in-demand striker Mario Gomez stays.

### THE COACH

Armin Veh surprisingly took Stuttgart to the league title in his first full season in charge (2006-07) but last season he and his side floundered, and some board members are just waiting to wield the knife.

Relentless drive...Hitzlsperger

### KEY PLAYER

German international midfielder Thomas Hitzlsperger offers relentless drive and uncommon shooting power from the left side.

Veh's favoured formation is a 4-4-2, with midfield diamond. However, this can easily be transformed to 4-2-3-1. On their day Stuttgart can knock the ball around with the best and are clever counter-attackers.

STUTTGART

## SUDUVA (LIT)

Togetherness...Suduva

Suduva, from Marijampole, an industrial city in southern Lithuania, were runners-up to FBK Kaunas in the 2007 league race. They have yet to go beyond the qualifying stages of the UEFA Cup. Their best performance was in 2002 when they beat Norwegian side Brann 6-4 on aggregate before losing heavily to Celtic (10-1) in the second qualifying round. This season they overcame Welsh side TNS with late goals in both legs of the first qualifying round.

### THE COACH

Igoris Pankratjevas was appointed earlier this year and has turned the team's form around.

### KEY PLAYER

Midfielder Ramunas Radavicius was the most impressive figure in the defeat of TNS.

Suduva play a straight 4-4-2. Midfielder Darius Maciulevicius could yet play an important role if he recovers from injury.

## TOTTENHAM (ENG)

Spurs spent a small fortune this summer on Luka Modric, Giovani Dos Santos, Heurelho Gomes and David Bentley, funded in part by the sale of Robbie Keane to Liverpool and (probably) Dimitar Berbatov to Manchester United. Since arriving last autumn, Spanish coach Juande

New boys...Giovani, Gomes and Modric

Ramos has worked hard to improve the team's fitness and in January he brought in defensive recruitments Alan Hutton and Jonathan Woodgate. Now he has added attacking options and Spurs will start the UEFA Cup as one of the favourites.

### THE MANAGER

Juande Ramos is looking to repeat his success with Sevilla at Spurs, where he is paid more than £4million a year.

### KEY PLAYER

With so many attacking midfielders around him, Jermaine Jenas will have to play a disciplined role to hold the team together.

Spurs have a lot of attacking talent – Bentley, Modric, Giovani – so there is a danger they could be seriously unbalanced. The big question is, who will play at centre-forward? Darren Bent will be favourite if Berbatov is sold.

## UDINESE (ITA)

Run of success...Marino

Udinese, who finished seventh in Serie A last term, were last in Europe three seasons ago, when they reached the Champions League group stage then dropped into the UEFA Cup, exiting in the last 16. A number of players from that side were sold on, including Vincenzo Iaquinta and Sulley Muntari, but there have been exciting arrivals – Chilean international Alexis Sanchez is the latest to arrive in Udine. He joins an already potent Italian strikeforce in Antonio Di Natale and Fabio Quagliarella.

### THE COACH

Pasquale Marino has found success with Udinese having previously taken Catania to their highest league position.

### KEY PLAYER

Chilean winger Alexis Sanchez will finally appear for Udinese after enhancing his considerable reputation on loan at Colo Colo and River Plate.

Quagliarella is the lone striker with Sanchez, Di Natale and Antonio Floro Flores taking it in turns to attack from deeper positions. In-demand Gokhan Inler is very effective in defensive midfield.

## UNIREA URZICENI (ROM)

Urziceni, from a town of only 30,000 inhabitants in south-east Romania, qualified for Europe for the first time by virtue of their appearance in the Cup Final, which they lost to champions CFR Cluj. They have appeared in the top flight for only two seasons. Their progress has followed some hefty investment from the club's backers, who supported the policy of coach Dan Petrescu to recruit players from his former clubs, notably Sportul Studentesc Bucharest.

Master builder...Petrescu

### THE COACH

Dan Petrescu, the former Chelsea and Romania defender, has built a successful squad very quickly.

### KEY PLAYER

Midfielder Bogdan Mara has been transformed into a winner under Petrescu.

Petrescu's side are a tight, well-organised unit whose main weapon is the counter-attack.

## VALENCIA (SPA)

Valencia have had a turbulent year, with five coaches, financial troubles and a change of ownership. They finished only 10th in the League but qualified for the UEFA Cup by winning the Spanish Cup. New coach Unai Emery will be hoping for a period of stability and, more importantly, for striker David Villa to stay on. This is also a big season for Joaquin, a big critic of unpopular ex-coach Ronald Koeman. Another disgruntled player, midfielder David Albelda, is staying at the club, though probably won't play in the first team.

### THE COACH

Unai Emery, 36, made his name with Almeria, guiding them to promotion in 2007 and seventh place last season.

### KEY PLAYER

The goals of in-demand David Villa were crucial in Valencia's past success and he would be very difficult to replace.

Cup of cheer...Villa

Emery is likely to start with a conservative formation, with the experienced Carlos Marchena and Ruben Baraja in central midfield, though the coach could introduce the younger Hedwiges Maduro or Ever Banega later on.

## VASLUI (ROM)

Vaslui have come from nowhere in the past two years, thanks to the investment of former FIFA referee Adrian Porumboiu, now one of Romania's richest businessmen, and the coaching work of former international midfielder Dorinel

Change-maker...Hizo

Munteanu, who built a side around players rejected by other clubs. Munteanu has now been succeeded by Viorel Hizo, who oversaw the InterToto Cup victory over Neftchi Baku that put Vaslui into the UEFA Cup. "We've achieved our target," Hizo said. "Anything more will be a bonus."

### THE COACH

The experienced Viorel Hizo has rung the changes since taking over this summer.

### KEY PLAYER

The assists of ex-Steaua midfielder Marian Aliuta are crucial.

Vaslui brought in a large number of players this summer, making it hard to predict how they will line up, but the goals of midfielder Marko Ljubinkovic will be crucial.

## VIKING (NOR)

Viking have struggled in the League this year and look unlikely to emulate last season's third-place finish. German coach Uwe Rosler set his aims high but has been hampered by the injury absence of last season's leading striker, Nigerian Peter Ijeh. Now, Lithuanian forward Andreas Velicka has joined Rangers, leaving Viking even lighter up front. But keeper Thomas Myhre has refound some form after injury problems and

Vanquishers...Viking (in blue) v Vetra

central defenders Borre Stenslid and Ragnvald Soma have also been solid. They beat Vetra of Lithuania in the UEFA Cup first qualifying round.

### THE COACH

Ex-Man City striker Uwe Rosler steered Viking to third place in the League last term, his first at the helm.

### KEY PLAYER

Former Udinese midfielder Allan Gaarde joined Viking in 2005 and has been the club's most consistent performer in recent times.

Viking have strength in depth in midfield but lack top-quality strikers. Forward Alexander Odegaard offers good pace up front and Jone Samuelsen and Nicolai Stokholm work tirelessly in central midfield.

## VITORIA SETUBAL (POR)

Surging runs...Ricardo Chaves

Setubal were last season's surprise package in Portugal, winning the inaugural edition of the League Cup and finishing sixth in the championship, despite having the smallest budget in the top flight. Coach Carlos Carvalhal and several high-profile players left for greener pastures, meaning the odds are stacked against new coach Dauto Faquira producing a repeat. The club are in the UEFA Cup for the third time in four seasons but have lost in the first round on both previous occasions.

### THE COACH

Mozambique-born Dauto Faquira is one of Portugal's most promising coaches. The 42-year-old rose to prominence with Estrela Amadora.

### KEY PLAYER

Ricardo Chaves is an energetic, tenacious midfielder who makes surging runs into the box and creates scoring opportunities.

Setubal's strength is in central midfield where Leandro Lima and Ricardo Chaves will be expected to show plenty of determination and skill. Lacking true wingers, Faquira will ask both forwards to take up wide positions.

## VLLAZNIA (ALB)

Vllaznia are one of Albania's most successful teams, and though they underperformed in the League last season, they beat traditional rivals FK Tirana 2-0 in the Cup Final to book their UEFA Cup place. Vllaznia have a reputation for rearing some of the country's brightest talent, including current centre-back Admir Teli and centre-forward Xhevair Sukaj. The Shkoder-based club are one of the best supported in Albania, with average attendances of 5,000 to 6,000, but the 20,000-capacity Loro

Making the difference...Sukaj

Borici stadium will be full for the UEFA Cup campaign.

### THE COACH

Newly-appointed Agim Canaj is one of Albania's most experienced and successful coaches.

### KEY PLAYER

Xhevair Sukaj's goals have given Vllaznia the edge in many games.

Vllaznia will play with a relatively conservative 4-4-2 in the UEFA Cup. The axis of the team is centre-back Teli, midfielders Gilman Lika and Albert Kaci and forward Sukaj, who is supported by captain Vioresin Sinani.

## VOJVODINA (SER)

The rise of Vojvodina was brought to an abrupt halt in January when chairman Ratko Butorovic was arrested on suspicion of match-fixing and forced to resign. Several key

Pulling strings...Popovic

players were sold to foreign clubs, including Gojko Kacar (Hertha Berlin) and Ranko Despotovic (Rapid Bucharest). Nevertheless, the Novi Sad club began the new season with big ambitions: coach Dragoljub Bekvalac set the twin target of challenging for the Serbian league title and reaching the UEFA Cup group stage.

### THE COACH

Dragoljub Bekvalac, who guided Rabotnicki to the Double in Macedonia last season, is starting his fourth stint with Vojvodina.

### KEY PLAYER

Aleksandar Popovic pulls the strings in midfield and delivers good balls from set-pieces.

Vojvodina are solid defensively and have plenty of attacking options thanks to the individual qualities of attacking midfielders such as Under-21 international Dusan Tadic and veteran Miodrag Pantelic.

## WIT GEORGIA (GEO)

To the fore...forward Kvaratskhelia

The Tbilisi club were runners-up in the Georgian League last season and reached the UEFA Cup second qualifying round for the first time by beating Slovakians Spartak Trnava 3-2 on aggregate. President Guram Rukhadze has invested heavily in youth development and the squad is solely composed of home-grown players. The club are nicknamed the Veterinaries because they are backed by WIT Georgia, a subsidiary of American World Innovation Technologies, a veterinary pharmaceuticals company. They won their only league title in 2004.

### THE COACH

Nestor Mumladze was voted Georgia's coach of the year last season.

### KEY PLAYER

Irakli Klimiashvili is a hard-working, aggressive midfielder with excellent technical skills.

Mumladze uses a standard 4-4-2 formation. The defence, the best in the Georgian League at the moment, is commanded by international Alexander Kvakhadze.

## WOLFSBURG (GER)

To build on their surprising fifth-place finish last term, the VW-backed club splashed out on a pair of Italian international defenders, Andrea Barzagli and Cristian Zaccardo. That underlined Wolfsburg's ambition but the swoop is not without its risks. Moving to another country is never easy, and both newcomers have a reputation for allowing their concentration to slip.

Leaps and bounds...Grafite

### THE COACH

Ex-Bayern boss Felix Magath has proved at Wolfsburg that he does not need big bucks to put a competitive team together.

### KEY PLAYER

Brazilian goalgetter Grafite came on in leaps and bounds at Le Mans and now Wolfsburg, whom he joined last summer for £6.25million.

Magath swears by a no-frills 4-4-2. Wolfsburg can be very difficult to break down since, at the merest hint of trouble, the two outside men in the midfield diamond fall back alongside the central defenders.

## YOUNG BOYS (SWI)

Last season was the Boys' best in the League since 2004. They kept up the pressure on Basle until the bitter end and deservedly finished runners-up. But a disastrous start to the new campaign – one point from

Evasive action...forward Eudis

their first three games – led to the board firing coach Martin Andermatt and bringing in Vladimir Petkovic from promoted Bellinzona. But the team have not found a replacement for star playmaker and team leader Hakan Yakin, who has moved to the Gulf.

### THE COACH

Vladimir Petkovic won much praise last term for steering Bellinzona to promotion. The Swiss-Croat is a qualified social worker.

### KEY PLAYER

Captain Thomas Haberli is a very under-rated striker, with just one cap to his name.

Petkovic generally uses a 4-4-2. The midfield comprises two enforcers and two more incisive types on the flanks. The drive of Carlos Varela on the right is particularly important.

## ZILINA (SLK)

Provincial Zilina have won the Slovak league title four times in the past seven years and finished runners-up last season and in 2004-05. But they have paid the price for success, losing several of their best players, notably forward Marek Mintal (Nurnberg) and defender Tomas Hubocam (Zenit St Petersburg). Zilina made it into the UEFA Cup second qualifying round with a 3-2 aggregate defeat of MTZ-RIPO of Belarus.

### THE COACH

Czech Pavel Vrba, 45, has a positive attitude and his team could surprise a few in Europe.

Running jump...full-back Pekarik

### KEY PLAYER

Keeper Dusan Pernis is reliable and spreads confidence throughout the defence.

Zilina use a 4-1-3-2 formation in which Zdeno Strba links the defence and midfield. Hard-shooting Robert Jez is an essential back-up to the attack of Peter Styvar and Mislav Karoglan.

## ZRINJSKI (BOS)

Victory over Vaduz...midfielder Zadro

Zrinjski are widely felt to play the most attractive football in the Bosnian Premier League but are not as consistent as they might be. The foundations of the current team were laid in 2005 by former Zrinjski player Blaz Sliskovic, who was Bosnian national team coach at the same time as holding the reins at the Mostar-based club. The town is full of tensions between supporters of Zrinjski, a Croatian club, and Bosnian (Muslim) club Velez, and there are often violent incidents. Zrinjski beat Vaduz of Liechtenstein to reach the UEFA Cup second qualifying round.

### THE COACH

Dragan Jovic is one of the best coaches in the Bosnian top flight. He often changes his line-up.

### KEY PLAYER

Mladen Zizovic is a strong, direct midfielder who reads the game well and has a very powerful shot.

Zrinjski play open, attacking and aggressive football, with the defensive players often joining in the forward forays. New midfield signing Ante Serdarusic (from Posusje) covers a lot of ground.

## ZURICH (SWI)

Zurich won the Swiss league title in 2006 and 2007 but have stagnated under coach Bernard Challandes, who succeeded Hertha Berlin-bound Lucien Favre a year ago. This slide is essentially down to the club selling their best players. Zurich have also suffered an injury jinx of late and will miss Tunisian attacking midfielder Yassine Chikhaoui, who is expected to be out until the end of the year with a serious knee infection. No one in these parts talks about winning the championship any more, let alone performing well in Europe.

### THE COACH

Bernard Challandes cemented his reputation as a good strategist and motivator during six years in charge of Switzerland's Under-21s. He has also led Servette and Young Boys.

Something to aim at...Hassli

### KEY PLAYER

Frenchman Eric Hassli is a towering target man bought from Valenciennes last year.

Challandes was once a devotee of 4-4-2 but now prefers 4-2-3-1 and likes a direct attacking style. Finn Hannu Tihinen is the main defensive organiser but is injury-prone. Almen Abdi is the motor in midfield.

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# TALENT SCOUT

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

## Stevan Jovetic

MONTENEGRO

### Leader set to impress in Serie A

PANTALEO CORVINO has struck once again. By beating a host of top European clubs to the signature of 18-year-old Partizan Belgrade striker Stevan Jovetic, the Fiorentina director of sport has enhanced his reputation as one of the best talent-spotters in the business.

Jovetic, already a Montenegrin international and the skipper of Partizan as they won the league and cup Double in Serbia last season, had been heavily tipped to join a continental heavyweight such as Manchester United or Real Madrid.

However, when the rumour mill smoke finally cleared, the much-coveted teenager was Fiorentina-bound, obviously receptive to Corvino's argument that he would have infinitely more playing time in Tuscany than at one of the over-staffed big guns.

"I'm in love with this player," Corvino gushed at the press conference where Jovetic was unveiled. "We think that we have bought one of the greatest talents of his generation, someone who I'm convinced will turn out to be very important to us. Everyone wanted him.

"Although he's young, the fact that he has captained both Partizan and the Montenegro Under-21s shows that he has the right character and attitude. While it is early days in his career, he looks ripe for the top level at this very moment."

Corvino's enthusiasm is comprehensible. For just £6.3million, the Florence outfit have got their hands on an exciting young front-runner of almost limitless potential.

The curly-haired prodigy has skill in abundance, is excellent in the timing of his forward runs, not easily out-muscled, can shoot powerfully with either foot and is a natural finisher at close range. Serie A defenders be warned: Jovetic is at his most potent when building up a head of steam from deep positions.

The last Montenegrin to shine on the Italian scene was Milan attacking midfielder Dejan Savicevic 15 years ago. Jovetic could make a similar impact in a more forceful, explosive style.

*Nick Bidwell*

**FACT FILE**

**Club** Fiorentina (Ita)
**Country** Montenegro
**Born** November 2, 1989, in Podgorica
**Previous clubs** Mladost Podgorica, Partizan Belgrade (Ser)
**International debut** March 2007, v Hungary
**Caps** 2 (0 goals)
**Honours** Serbian League 2008; Serbian Cup 2008

## Pablo PIATTI

ARGENTINA

### Move too soon for little big man?

A YEAR AGO, just after helping Argentina win the Under-20 World Cup, Maxi Moralez left Avellaneda club Racing for FC Moscow – and on these pages we wondered if he would adapt to the more physical style of play in Europe and whether he had gone abroad too soon. Soon after Christmas he was back at Racing.

Now, Pablo Piatti, another diminutive member of the Under-20 side, makes the move to Europe – to Almeria in Spain – and the questions must be asked again.

Piatti was the baby of the Under-20 triumph at 18 and three months. But he had made a sensational debut for Estudiantes, in November 2006, coming off the bench to head the winner against Newell's Old Boys. Those points helped Estudiantes to their first league title in 23 years.

Piatti really came into his own the next year, playing in a wide role on the left of Estudiantes' front three.

Perhaps he would have done better to have stayed an extra year in Argentina. But money talks and it was no surprise when he joined Almeria. This little big man has the potential, but can he cope better than Moralez?

*Tim Vickery*

**FACT FILE**

**Club** Almeria (Spa)
**Country** Argentina
**Born** March 31, 1989, in La Carlota
**Previous club** Estudiantes
**Honours** Under-20 World Cup 2007; Argentinian opening championship 2006

## Hugo LLORIS

FRANCE

### Lyon's bright new keeper

HUGO LLORIS, the outstanding 21-year-old keeper chosen by Lyon to replace Atletico Madrid-bound Gregory Coupet, is far from the identikit professional. He was brought up on the opulent Cote d'Azur by a lawyer mother and Monte Carlo banker father.

Not surprisingly, given his background, Lloris' first taste of sport was at his parents' tennis club, where he showed much promise. However, he also soon developed a love of throwing himself around a football goal and at the age of 11 was deemed good enough to join Nice's schoolboy section.

But Lloris did not neglect his studies, passing his science baccalaureat (the equivalent of the UK's A levels). "For me, the game is not at all incompatible with academic work," he says. "My priority was to succeed at school and then see where my football would take me."

And the answer was straight to the top. After representing France at Under-18 level, Lloris broke into the Nice first-team squad in 2005 and established himself as an automatic starter for the 2006-07 season.

"What impresses me most about Hugo is the enormous presence that he has on his line and in the box," enthuses former France No 1 Fabien Barthez. "At the back for Nice, I see only him. He's everywhere."

Both Tottenham and Milan were willing to invest in his services this summer. But Lloris quite sensibly concluded that a move (for £8.3million) to perennial champions Lyon was the best option.

*Nick Bidwell*

**FACT FILE**

**Club** Lyon
**Country** France
**Born** December 26, 1986, in Nice
**Previous clubs** Cedac Cimiez, Nice
**Honours** European Under-19 Championship 2005

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# SOCCER CITIES

**BRUSSELS** The clubs, the history, what to see, how to get there

Echoes of the past...the King Baudouin stadium holds grim memories in its previous incarnation as the Heysel

# Mauves and **mergers**

## Anderlecht are the royalty of the Belgian capital's football but there is romance to be found among the lower orders, says Peterjon Cresswell

BRUSSELS HAS a notorious place in football history. It was the scene of the game's most striking tragedy, at Heysel stadium – now the King Baudouin – in 1985, and the previous year its flagship club, Anderlecht, made it to the Final of the UEFA Cup with the aid of bribery.

For all that, the Belgian capital still attracts the football romantic. Quaint local teams form the fabric of the lower leagues. Some have amalgamated, others disappeared entirely. The names leap out of a boy's comic – Daring Club, Royal Racing White, Skill FC de Bruxelles. Two colourful outfits remain: FC Brussels, or FC Molenbeek Brussels Strombeek, whose emergence in 2003 kept the Molenbeek name alive, and Union St-Gilloise, whose ground sits amid urban forest south of the city.

A visit there, to Molenbeek or Anderlecht, is like a trip to another era. On a wall of the bars near each ground will be a league ladder in bright colours, the teams' positions faithfully recorded each weekend. Along with an enviable selection of Belgian beers, you can order Oxo, Ovaltine or Bovril, beneath mounted vintage scarves and badges. Knowledgeable football talk ensues. Belgians, supreme collectors of trivia and Anglophiles all, still appreciate the game at its grassroots, a world away from the executive boxes of Chelsea, Milan and Real Madrid.

Royal Sporting Club Anderlecht are the country's most successful club, always a cut above. *Les Mauves* celebrated their centenary in May with a gala dinner but events for the ordinary fan were thin on the ground.

Appealing to the French-speaking local business community, Anderlecht embraced the modern era after beer baron Constant Vanden Stock took over in the 1970s. Vanden Stock was part of the Anderlecht side who came to life when the legendary Jef Mermans arrived from tiny Borherhout in 1942. It is said that Anderlecht officials came to the Antwerp suburb brandishing a blank cheque.

### First title

Mermans led *Les Mauves* to their first league title in 1947 and many more through the 1950s. Anderlecht's titles meant they made regular appearances in the early years of the European Cup but they suffered some big defeats by British opposition – a 10-0 drubbing by Manchester United stands out.

> **"Anderlecht's fortunes looked up with the emergence of the great Paul Van Himst"**

The club's continental fortunes looked up with the emergence of the great Paul Van Himst. In 1970 they beat Internazionale on their way to the Fairs Cup Final but having beaten Arsenal 3-1 in the first leg, in Brussels, they lost the return 3-0. European silverware finally arrived in 1976 when a team featuring Rob Rensenbrink and Francois Van der Elst beat West Ham 4-2 in the Cup-winners Cup Final. They won it again two years later.

By now Vanden Stock was at the helm, and had invested the small fortune gained from his Belle-Vue beers in modernising the Parc Astrid, the first stadium in continental Europe with executive boxes. Anderlecht won the UEFA Cup in 1983 but the pressure to keep success coming prompted the chairman to step outside the law. In the following season's tournament, Anderlecht faced Nottingham Forest in the semi-final and lost the first leg 2-0. It has since been proved that Vanden Stock bribed

Brussels derby day...Anderlecht's Argentinian midfielder Lucas Biglia shields the ball from Pavel Fort of FC Brussels

**SURVIVAL GUIDE**

# Mussel power

**● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT**

Zaventem airport is eight miles north-east of the city. Four trains an hour (20-30mins journey time) link with the three main central stations – Midi (top picture), Centrale and Nord. The Airport Line bus (30mins) goes to Luxembourg near the European Quarter. The Eurostar from London has its terminus at Midi. Some budget airlines use Charleroi, an hour by train from Brussels. City centre transport comprises two metro lines, trams and buses. A five-ride ticket costs €7 (£5.50), a 10-ride €11.50 (£9) and a day pass €4.50 (£3.50). A Brussels Card (one day €20/£16, two days €28/£22, three days €33/£26) is valid for all city transport.

**● HOTELS**

For pure class, Le Dixseptieme (bottom picture) (25 Rue de la Madeleine; +32 2 517 17 17; €200/£160) near the Grand'Place main square is unbeatable. The Atlas (Rue du Vieux Marche aux Grains 30; +32 2 502 60 06; €75-130/£60-100) is a decent mid-range hotel. The comfortable Galia (Place du Jeu de Balle 15-16; +32 2 502 42 43; €75/£60) is set over the daily market in Marolles. Hotels can be booked through the main tourist office (Grand'Place; +32 2 513 89 40; www.brusselsinternational.be).

**● EATING & DRINKING**

Brussels is one of Europe's great gastronomic capitals. Local dishes include meats cooked with beer, and most places do mussels with chips served with mayonnaise. Aux Armes de Bruxelles (Rue des Bouchers 13; +32 2 511 55 50) offers the classics in historic surroundings. The Falstaff (Rue Henri Maus 19-25; +32 2 511 87 89) is a landmark cafe-restaurant near the Bourse. Belgium is famous for its beers, which can be sampled in age-old venues such as Cirio (Rue de la Bourse 18; +32 2 512 13 95), Le Greenwich (Rue des Chartreux 7; +32 2 511 41 67) and A La Mort Subite (Rue Montagne-aux-Herbes Potageres 7; +32 2 513 13 18).

**● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT**

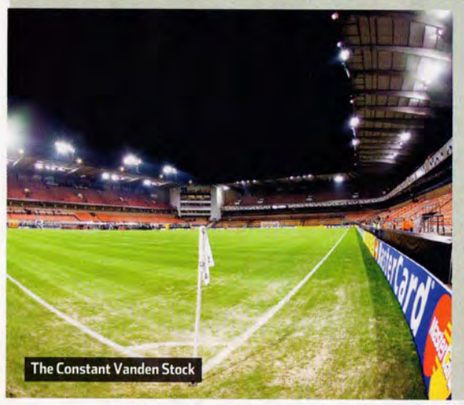
The renovated Musee des Beaux-Arts (Rue de la Regence 3; +32 2 508 32 11; www.kmskb.be) has a superb collection of Flemish masters and Belgian Surrealists, including Magritte, whose former house is also a museum (Rue d'Esseghem 135; +32 2 428 26 26; www.magrittemuseum.be). The Grand'Place is a sight in itself but the Mannekin-Pis statue (middle picture) nearby is a disappointment, as is the Atomium (pictured second top), part of a theme park built for the 1958 Expo in Laeken.

**● AFTER DARK**

The Fuse (Rue Blaes 208; www.fuse.be) has consistently excellent DJ sounds. Ancienne Belgique (Boulevard Anspaach 110; +32 2 548 24 24) has high-quality live music.

## THE STADIUMS

The King Baudouin


The Constant Vanden Stock

The Joseph Marien

### Soul searching

Belgium's national stadium, King Baudouin, formerly known as the Heysel, was rebuilt for Euro 2000 and has a capacity of 50,000. It's a bit soulless, with a running track surrounding the pitch. It has its own stop on metro line 1A.

Anderlecht's Constant Vanden Stock stadium, formerly known as Parc Astrid, is a short walk from St-Guidon metro stop, though fans are sometimes requested to use the Aumale stop for security purposes. The venue holds 26,300, fewer for European games, when all-seating is required.

The ticket office (open weekdays 10am-5.30pm, Saturday 10am-noon) requires presentation of a passport or identity card. Best seats for neutrals are in tribune 3 (red).

FC Brussels are based way out in Molenbeek, which is best reached by metro line 1 to Beekkant, then bus 85. The 11,000-capacity Edmond Machtens stadium is a short walk ahead. Neutrals are best placed in blocks B and C in tribune 1, accessed through the main entrance. The ticket office (+32 2 412 71 73) is open weekdays 9.30am-12.30pm, 2pm-5pm and Saturdays until 3pm.

Union St-Gilloise are located in leafy Forest, reached by 82 tram from Brussels Midi (get off at the Union tramstop) or bus 48 from Porte de Hal. The Joseph Marien stadium (capacity 6,000) has a wonderful panelled clubhouse bar, worth a trip in itself.

Spanish referee Emilio Guruceta to help them gain a 3-0 win in the return in Brussels. But Anderlecht still could not repeat the previous year's feat, losing to Tottenham on penalties in the Final.

A precocious Enzo Scifo kept Anderlecht in the running for major continental honours in the mid-1980s but their last European Final to date was in 1990 when they lost to Sampdoria in the Cup-winners Cup. Since then *Les Mauves* have been limited to competing for silverware in the weak domestic league, establishing a duopoly with eternal rivals Club Brugge.

Vanden Stock's son Roger took over the chairmanship in 1996. Constant died this April. After the bribery scandal came to light, Anderlecht faced a serious image problem, which coincided with an exodus of the club's young talent to foreign leagues. Now, stuck with a hard core of troublesome followers, in the greyest part of Brussels, Anderlecht need a complete overhaul to be able to challenge the big teams across the border in Holland and Germany, let alone those from Serie A, La Liga or the Premier League.

FC Brussels have no such pretensions, having been relegated this May. The heyday of former incarnation RWD Molenbeek was in the mid-1970s. They won their only domestic championship in 1975 and, having persuaded Van Himst to jump ship from Anderlecht the following year, made the UEFA Cup semi-finals in 1977. RWD maintained respectable form until bankruptcy in 2002.

Out of the ashes rose the current oufit, still based in Molenbeek and still with the loyal band of trumpeters who play fanfares at crucial points in the game.

Union St-Gilloise won 11 titles before the war and enjoyed European campaigns in the early 1960s but then suffered a long period of yo-yoing between the second and third divisions. Many a bar in town will have a yellow-and-blue badge behind it – Union are considered the true Brussels club. ●

Spot on...Rensenbrink in the 1976 Cup-winners Cup Final

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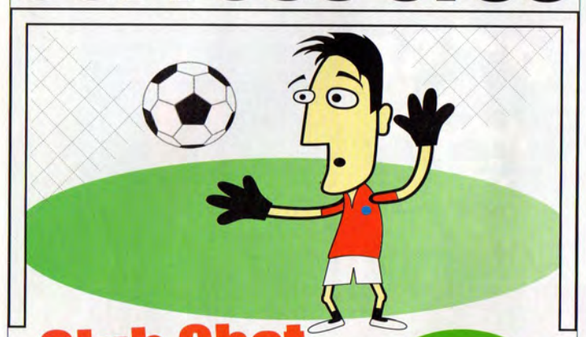

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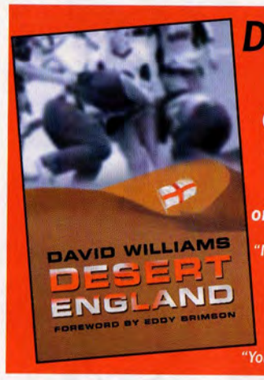

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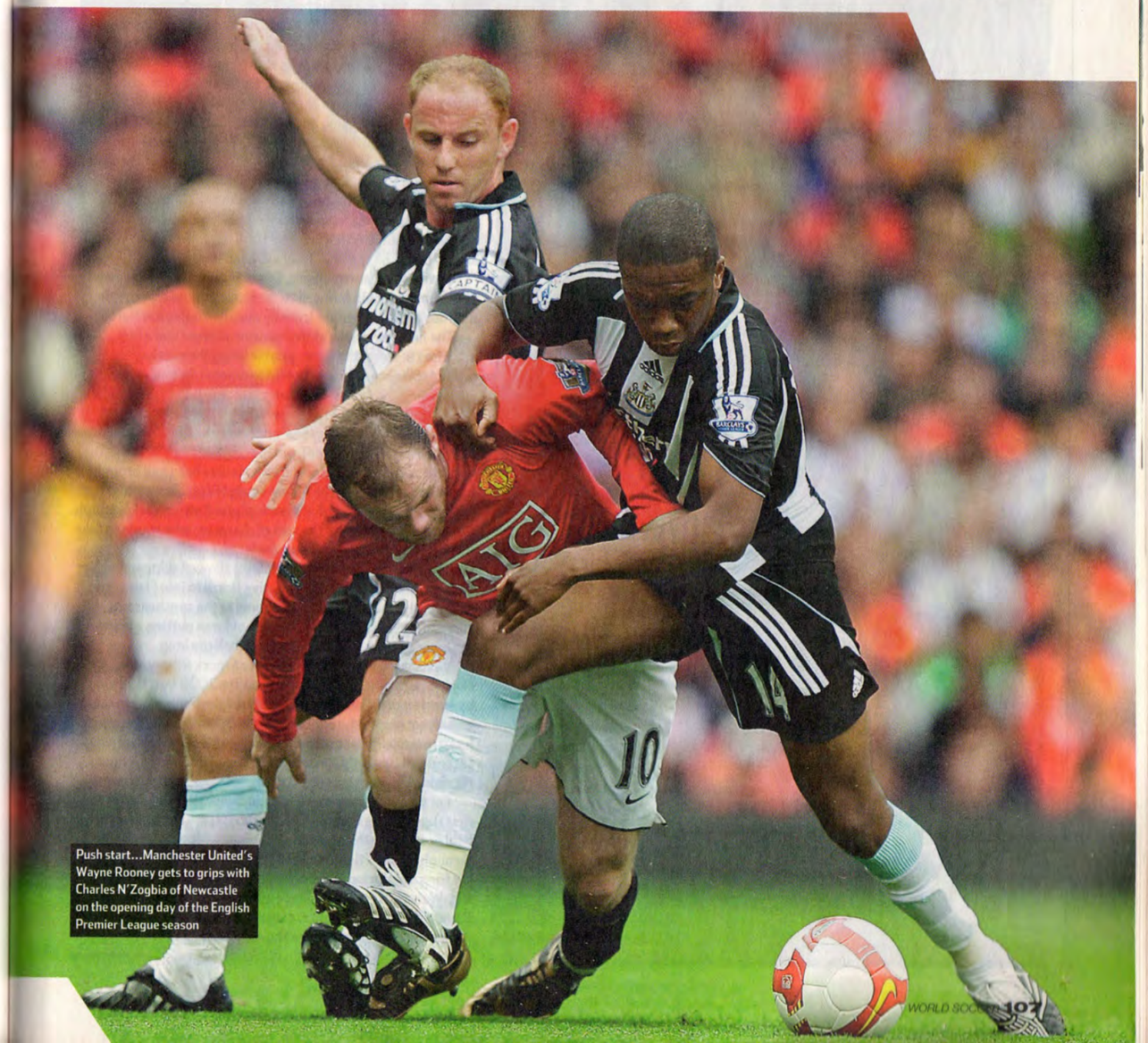


Push start...Manchester United's Wayne Rooney gets to grips with Charles N'Zogbia of Newcastle on the opening day of the English Premier League season

GERMANY

# The end for Jens

Last post...it's international retirement for foot-in-the-mouth Lehmann

AFTER WINNING 62 caps, keeper Jens Lehmann has announced his retirement from the national team. Given his age (38), his mixed performances at Euro 2008 and the recent comments of coach Joachim Low that hinted at imminent changes between the posts, this was hardly a surprise. Nevertheless, Lehmann had to be prodded towards the exit, convinced that he could remain the No 1 until the next World Cup finals.

Two factors sealed his fate. The first was that he has only a one-year contract with Stuttgart, whom he joined from Arsenal this summer. The second was yet more foot-in-mouth comments from Lehmann, who is a unique combination of the sensitive and the confrontational. Five weeks after Germany's European Championship Final loss to Spain in Vienna, the keeper was still seething and came out in the press with an astonishing broadside against the "biased" decision-making of Italian referee Roberto Rosetti.

To say the least, Low was not best pleased. "I've known Rosetti for a long time and he officiates to a high standard," the coach said. "We were disappointed about how the Final turned out, but we must not lose track of reality. Spain were simply better on the day. They were too strong for us."

Germany's team manager, Oliver Bierhoff, has suggested Lehmann might bid farewell to the international scene with a cameo in the November friendly against England in Berlin.

The final few weeks of the transfer window had a few surprises in store, the most notable being the signing by promoted Koln of Portuguese international defensive midfielder Petit from Benfica on a free. Keen to make drastic cuts in their wage bill and to prevent Petit's former club Boavista receiving a hefty sell-on bonus, the Lisbon outfit simply released the player from his contract.

Petit and Koln look a perfect fit. He was born and brought up not too far away in the Alsace capital Strasbourg and is just the sort of wholehearted, dynamic player Koln coach Christoph Daum swears by. "He's the sort of character who wants to take a firm grip of the reins," Daum declared.

In another shock move, Wolfsburg allowed skipper and No 10 Marcelinho to return to his native Brazil to join Flamengo. Apparently, coach Felix Magath came to the conclusion in summer friendlies that the 33-year-old was putting a brake on the team's attacks, holding on to the ball too long.

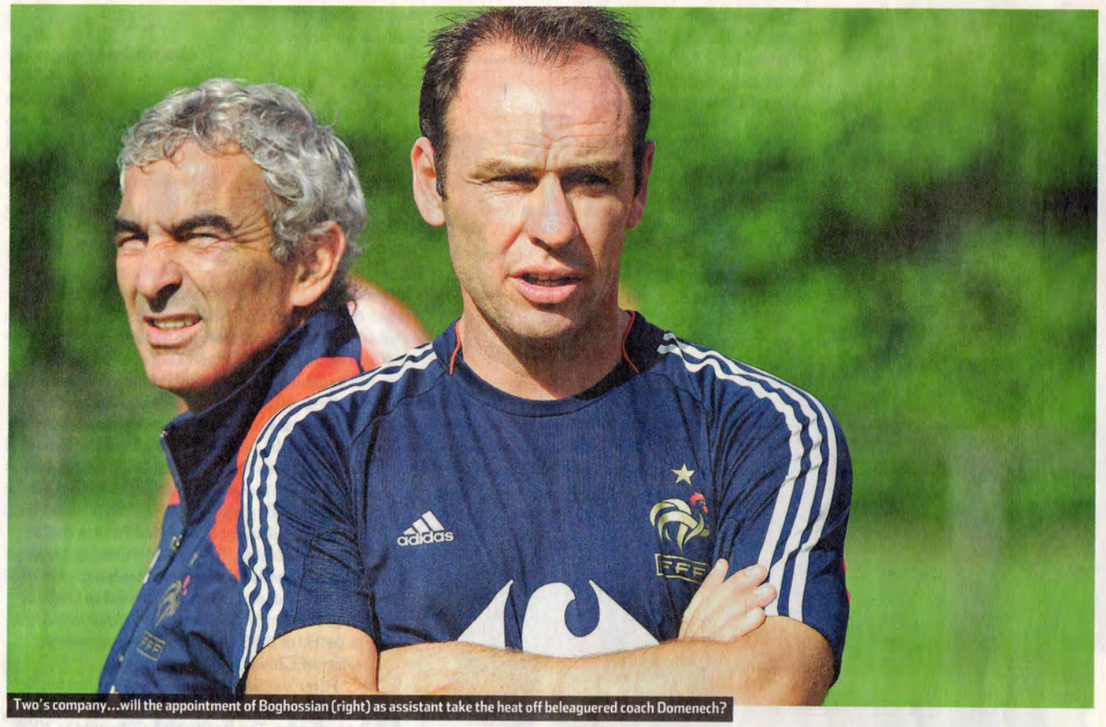
Virtuoso Bayern Munich attacker Franck Ribery was elected Germany's player of the year for 2008 by a landslide by sports journalists. Ribery, the first Frenchman to win the award, entranced the entire nation with his flair and happy-go-lucky personality last season. Chelsea's Michael Ballack was second and Bayern's Italian striker Luca Toni third. Ottmar Hitzfeld, who has since left Bayern, took the coaching award.

For the first time since 1998, no Bundesliga side fell in the first round of the German Cup. Bochum came the closest, being held goalless by the amateurs of Preusen Munster, but going through on penalties. Jurgen Klinsmann's Bayern Munich were far from convincing in their 4-3 victory over third division Rot-Weiss Erfurt. The defence was totally disorganised and Bayern secured the winner, courtesy of midfield starlet Toni Kroos, only 10 minutes from the end. Must do better.

**Nick Bidwell**






Two's company...will the appointment of Boghossian (right) as assistant take the heat off beleaguered coach Domenech?

FRANCE

# Bog a job

THE NATIONAL TEAM'S abject showing at Euro 2008 led to an outpouring of bile towards the very singular coach Raymond Domenech. But despite screams for his head, from Calais down to Marseille, he survived.

In a move that was seen by many as a sop to a disgruntled public, federation boss Jean-Pierre Escalettes appointed well-liked former international Alain Boghossian, a member of the victorious France 98 squad, as assistant to the beleaguered Domenech. A number of media outlets suggested Boghossian would prove to be nothing more than a cheerleader in the national team set-up, but the ex-player condemned the suggestion, pointing out that he has already got an official coach's diploma.

Boghossian is also convinced that he can help get the country back behind *Les Bleus*. So is media boss Pierre-Jean Golven, the man behind a federation-funded research initiative designed to "reinforce the close bond between the French team and the French public, its financial and media partners".

There have been other ructions at federation HQ, stemming from the ousting of Under-21s coach Rene Girard in the spring. "There was a coalition between [national technical director] Gerard Houllier and Raymond Domenech, two people who aren't exactly known for having good relationships with people," Girard said recently. "Together, they decided to get rid of me. And I'm bitter about it."

His successor is Erick Mombaerts, once Houllier's right-hand man at Paris Saint-Germain.

As for the club game, there was hardly frenzied transfer activity in the days before the League kicked off on August 9. But there were some interesting moves. Much-hyped American Freddy Adu arrived at Monaco on a season-long loan from Benfica, along with Croat defender Dario Simic from Milan. Striker Frederic Piquionne moved from Monaco to Lyon. Piquionne was the hero of Lyon's arch-rivals, Saint-Etienne, not so long ago and had been very publicly blocked from moving directly to the champions by Saint-Etienne's president.

The wheeling and dealing of Monaco coach Ricardo seemed to do the trick as his team beat Paris Saint-Germain, featuring big-name recruits Ludovic Giuly and Claude Makelele, 1-0 at home on the opening day. So the vultures were circling early over Parc des Princes as PSG took on Laurent Blanc's Bordeaux the following weekend. But new striker Guillaume Hoarau put a smile on the face of coach Paul Le Guen as he hit the only goal of the game. Was Hoarau particularly motivated by the news that PSG had finally clinched the signing of striker Mateja Kezman from Fenerbahce?

PSG's relief at getting off the mark would have been tempered by the success of arch-rivals Marseille, who thrashed Auxerre 4-0 to confirm the pre-season feeling that the southern giants really could pose a serious threat to Lyon in the title race this season.

And what of the champions? After an emphatic 3-0 home win against a lacklustre Toulouse, Claude Puel's side managed only a 0-0 draw at Lorient after what many saw as an overly negative display. The emphasis on compact defence is surely designed to give Lyon more of a shot in the more technically demanding environment of the Champions League; the last thing Ligue 1 needs is for its leading club to adopt a more negative approach on the home front.

Finally, hats off to promoted Grenoble, whose victories over Sochaux and Rennes put them top of the pile.

**Howard Johnson**

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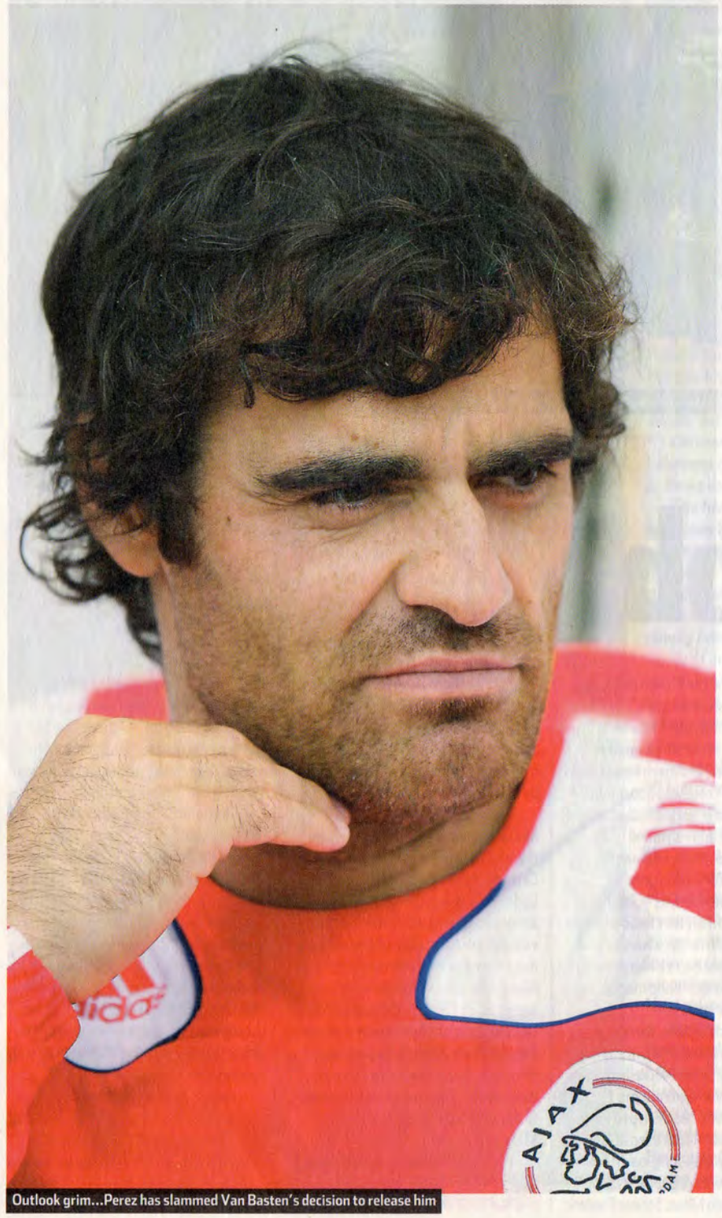
HOLLAND

# Clearout at Ajax


Outlook grim...Perez has slammed Van Basten's decision to release him

**MARCO VAN BASTEN, newly arrived at Ajax from the national team job, is cutting his squad to 24 and has told Albert Luque, Kenneth Perez, Edgar Manucharyan, Nicolae Mitea, Michael Krohn-Dehli, Laurent Delorge and Jurgen Colin that there is no room for them any more.**

**Leonardo, George Ogararu, Dennis Rommedahl and Kennedy Bakircioglu have been told they can remain in the squad but shouldn't count on much playing time.**

**The expulsions of Luque and Perez were the most eyecatching. The former arrived last year from Newcastle on the recommendation of Henk Ten Cate, but when the coach moved to Chelsea, Luque landed on the bench. Now, Ajax would love to get rid of the Spaniard, whose league-high salary of £2million is a heavy burden.**

**Perez's situation is even more curious and underlines Ajax's lack of vision and structure in recent years. The Danish striker, bought in 2006, wasn't exactly popular in the dressing room and has already left once, for PSV Eindhoven last summer. However, when PSV coach Ronald Koeman joined Valencia last autumn, it left Perez in an uncomfortable position and Ajax decided to buy him back during the winter break.**

**The Dane has slammed the decision to offload him, saying: "Ajax have no respect or ethics any more since Van Basten took charge." He is taking the matter to court in an attempt to force a return to the squad.**

**Ruud Van Nistelrooy has decided to quit international football, a surprise since he said "I'm not done with the national team" after Euro 2008. However, the 32-year-old striker now feels that playing for both club, Real Madrid, and country would be too much of a burden physically. Van Nistelrooy, who won 64 caps and scored 33 goals, follows in the wake of *Oranje* captain and keeper Edwin Van der Sar, who had made his announcement about quitting before Euro 2008.**

**New national coach Bert Van Marwijk selected his son-in-law, Mark Van Bommel, for the recent friendly against Russia. The new Bayern Munich skipper opted out of the national team scene during Van Basten's reign but said he would be available when a new coach started.**

**Marc Overmars is making an unexpected comeback. The 35-year-old former Ajax, Arsenal and Barcelona winger quit four years ago because of a serious knee injury but now feels fit enough to stand the rigours of second division football with Go Ahead Eagles, where he started his career. Overmars is already a board member at the Deventer club.**

**Klaas-Jan Droppert**





PORTUGAL

### Boavista condemned

Boavista's relegation to the second division was confirmed by league officials after the justice council of the Portuguese federation upheld the decision to punish the northern club for their involvement in the 2003-04 match-fixing scandal.

It is the first time Boavista, who played in the Champions League just six seasons ago, have been in the second tier since 1969. The decision means Pacos Ferreira have been reprieved from relegation.

Porto president Jorge Pinto da Costa has been suspended for two years for his part in the scandal.

Benfica have signed Jose Antonio Reyes on a season's loan from Atletico Madrid. The Andalucian winger joins fellow Spanish speakers Pablo Aimar, Oscar Cardozo and Angel Di Maria.

Sporting Lisbon have made few signings, concentrating instead on hanging on to youngsters Joao Moutinho and Miguel Veloso, wanted by Everton and Arsenal respectively.

**Pedro Pinto**

AUSTRIA

### Bullish Blanchard

Austria Wien's French captain Jocelyn Blanchard is bullish about his club's bid to regain the league title this season, saying: "We are pretty strong and I believe we can defeat both [defending champions] Rapid and Salzburg."

Austria were the only undefeated side after six rounds but three draws meant they trailed early leaders Sturm Graz and Rapid by a point. Blanchard was sidelined for a month after tearing a muscle in the opening fixture, a 1-1 draw at home to Austria Karnten.

**Harry Miltner**

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

### Saints run out of steam

Bohemians are favourites to win the league title after leapfrogging Dublin rivals St Patrick's Athletic and racing into a seven-point lead. It is the second season running that Saints have set the pace only to be overtaken. Last term it was Drogheda United who came good.

The Drogs are out of the running this season, but did Bohemians a big favour when beating Saints 1-0 away.

**Sean Creedon**

LIECHTENSTEIN

### Vaduz all mixed up

Vaduz had mixed fortunes at the start of their first season in the Swiss top flight. A 4-0 defeat at champions Basle dropped them to third bottom after the new boys got off to a great start, beating Lucerne 2-1 away and gaining a creditable 0-0 draw at Young Boys, last season's runners-up.

Vaduz's new signings include Brazilian midfielder Marcio Senna (Gremio Barauri) and Venezuelan midfielder Miguel Mea Vitali from Spanish second division side Lerida.

**Graeme Crawford**

BELGIUM

# Trouble in Beijing

**BELGIUM MADE IT through to the knockout stages of the Olympic football tournament despite the absence of two big-name players for the third and final group game against New Zealand, a 1-0 win.**

**Defender Vincent Kompany and midfielder Marouane Fellaini were sent off as Belgium lost 1-0 to Brazil in the opening game. The duo automatically picked up a ban for the next game, against China (a 2-0 win), but Fellaini was suspended for a further match for banging the fourth official's table with his fist on his way to the dressing room.**

**Kompany would have been available again for the tie against the Kiwis and was adamant that he would remain in China for the match, despite an agreement with club side Hamburg that he would return home after two games in order to be available for the opening Bundesliga tie, against Bayern Munich. His complaint that he hadn't played two games cut little ice with Hamburg, who threatened to suspend him. Kompany reluctantly flew home, moaning about a lack of support from the Belgian federation.**

You're off...Kompany (No 3) is red-carded against Brazil

**Former top division club Verbroedering Geel have been declared bankrupt and lost their place in Division 3B. The club, four years short of their centenary, spent a single season in the top flight, 1999-2000. After relegation they were then demoted to the third division at the end of the 2004-05 season for misdemeanours during their final game.**

**Geel's De Leunen stadium will now be used by the town's other team, Verbroedering Geel Meerhout, of Division 4C, who have vacated their own Katten stadium.**

**Champions Standard Liege won the Super Cup with a 3-1 defeat of cup-holders Anderlecht, who were still smarting from their Champions League qualifying exit at the hands of BATE Borisov of Belarus. United States defender Oguchi Onyewu scored twice; Benjamin Nicaise got the third. Anderlecht's new Argentinian striker Matias Suarez scored from a penalty.**

**Cercle Brugge have pulled off a transfer coup by recruiting national team striker Thomas Buffel from Rangers. Buffel was on Cercle's books as a 16-year-old but never appeared in the first team before moving to Holland with Feyenoord.**

**Nicholas Harling**

Poor start... Andermatt

SWITZERLAND

# Young Boys axe Andermatt

YOUNG BOYS, last season's league runners-up, fired coach Martin Andermatt after taking just one point from the first three games of the new campaign. The Berne club have replaced him with Swiss-Croat Vladimir Petkovic, whose contract with Bellinzona was not extended despite steering the Tessin side to the top flight last season after a 23-year break.

Petkovic has signed until 2010 with an option for a further two years and admitted he faces a tough task. Team morale is low after the poor start and the abrupt departure of captain and playmaker Hakan Yakin to Qatar.

Lucerne have also pulled the plug early on their coach, former national team captain Ciriaco Sforza, after taking only one point from five games. Sforza said he felt he no longer had the full support of his players.

His last game was a 1-0 defeat at Aarau, the surprise early leaders with 14 points from six games and also the only unbeaten side. Champions Basle were second, two points behind but with a game in hand.

**Ivar von Rulach**

*Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums*

SCOTLAND

# Crushed by Kaunas

**RANGERS' European hopes, heightened by reaching the UEFA Cup Final in May, were crushed when they lost 2-1 on aggregate to modest Lithuanian club FBK Kaunas in the Champions League second qualifying round. Pundits have called the result the club's worst in 52 years of European competition, and Rangers' failure to reach the group stage has cost them an estimated £12million.**

**More galling still, the £2m they would have received from the TV money pool for reaching the last 32 will go to Celtic, now Scotland's only Champions League representatives.**

**Although Rangers denied they would now be forced to sell their most valuable players, that did not stop Spanish centre-back Carlos Cuellar, who enjoyed an impressive debut season in the SPL last term, joining Aston Villa for £7.8million.**

**Celtic made the biggest coup of the summer transfer window when signing Barcelona's young defensive midfielder Marc Crosas. The initial outlay is £415,000, which could rise to £1.6m depending on the number of appearances he makes. Barcelona will receive 25 per cent of the fee if he is sold on.**

**Dan Brennan**

It's all going wrong...Rangers manager Walter Smith and assistant Ally McCoist (left) ponder their side's misfortunes while the Kaunas bench look equally bemused

DENMARK

### Baba boomer

Baba Collins hit a hat-trick as Midtjylland beat early leaders OB Odense 4-0 at home to go top of the table after four games.

"I felt as if I was dreaming," said the 19-year-old Nigerian. "But I know I have many more goals in me this season."

Midtjylland's results have made it a great start for new young head coach Thomas Thomasberg.

Brondby, so troubled in recent times, won three of their first four games to draw level with OB in second, a point behind Midtjylland. The run included a victory away to Horsens, the team coached by Kent Nielsen, who will take charge of Brondby in January.

**Jim Holden**

*Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums*

FINLAND

### Indomitable Inter

Inter stretched their unbeaten run to 16 games and took a four-point lead as they hunt their first championship. The Turku side, led by Dutchman Job Dragtsma, put in two superb displays in a week, crushing much-fancied city rivals TPS 3-0, then tearing apart Haka, another high-flying side, 4-0 away.

Inter have boosted their strikeforce with Croat Domagoi Abramovic and Dutchman Giulliano Grot.





Veteran Jari Litmanen is attempting to relaunch his club career with hometown club Lahti. The 37-year-old has not played a league match for nearly two years because of injury, first with Malmo and then Fulham. Litmanen still figures in the plans of national coach Stuart Baxter but obviously needs match practice.

**Pentti Hietanen**

ICELAND

### Twins back at troubled IA

Former leading lights IA fired coach Gudjon Thordarson after a 6-1 thrashing at Breidablik, which left the club staring relegation in the face.

Twins Arnar and Bjarki Gunnlaugsson have been brought in from league leaders FH as co-player-coaches. The duo rescued IA, their hometown club, from relegation two years ago in a dramatic escape. However, the task looks even harder this time round. The Akranes club, champions five years running in the 1990s, were seven points from safety with seven games remaining, having won just one of their 15 games.

It has been another poor year in Europe, with only FH making it past the first hurdle, in the UEFA Cup. The Hafnarfjordur side routed Grevenmacher of Luxembourg 8-3 to set up a money-spinning tie against Aston Villa.

**Rab Christie**

ESTONIA

### Two-horse race

The League appears to be a two-horse race, with leaders and champions Levadia and their Tallinn rivals Flora well clear of the pack.

Mid-table Nomme have signed Estonia midfielder Maksim Smirnov, 28, from Latvian side Ventspils. He has previously played for Flora and Levadia. Flora bought national team forward Oliver Konsa from TVMK.

**Andres Must**

LATVIA

### Rudiger awakening

German Rudiger Abramczik made a fine start as Metalurgs Liepaja coach, his new charges thrashing Jurmala 7-2. However, the club were still 10 points adrift of leaders Ventspils.

Second-placed Skonto Riga sold midfielder Viktor Moroz to CSKA Sofia and striker Andrejs Pereplotkins (Derby).

**Andres Must**

WALES

### Euro whitewash

All three European competition entrants fell at the first hurdle. Llanelli beat Ventspils of Latvia 1-0 in the first, home leg of their Champions League tie but put in a poor performance in the return, going down 4-0.

The New Saints lost 2-0 on aggregate to Suduva of Lithuania in the UEFA Cup, in which Bangor City were thrashed 10-1 by Denmark's Midtjylland.

Llanelli, The New Saints and Rhyl look as if they will be the leading contenders to win the domestic league. Newcomers Prestatyn Town are relying almost entirely on their promotion-winning squad to keep them afloat.

**Mel Thomas**

NORTHERN IRELAND

### Fanfare goes flat

The much-heralded start of the new-look, 12-team Premiership was delayed by a week because of a referees' strike. They demanded an increase in fees for top league games from £70 to £120 and the appointment of independent assistant referees for second tier games; in previous seasons, club representatives had run the line.

The authorities acceded to both demands but less than 48 hours before the big kick-off – too late to avert the strike action. It was an embarrassment for the FA, who had championed the new set-up as "the dawn of a new era".

All three European representatives fell at the first hurdle – Linfield going out to Dinamo Zagreb in the Champions League, Glentoran and Cliftonville to Metalurgs Liepaja and FC Copenhagen respectively in the UEFA Cup.

**Roy Kitson**

NORWAY

# Stabaek stop the rot

Bonjour, France...new boy Helstad shows his Le Mans shirt

**STABAEK, seeking their first league title, put aside a mid-season blip to go back to the top with four straight wins, including a 5-1 thrashing of fellow high-fliers Fredrikstad and a 2-1 victory away to Rosenborg.**

**Stabaek, who also suffered mid-season problems last term and lost out to Brann in the title race, appear to have learned their lesson by considerably strengthening their squad – Swede Pontus Farnerud and Icelander Palmi Palmason give coach Jan Jonsson far more alternatives in midfield. Meanwhile, Brazilian Alanzinho has shown some great attacking flair.**

**Fredrikstad cashed in on the good early-season showing of striker Tarik Elyounoussi, selling him to Heerenveen, while Thorstein Helstad, top scorer with Brann, moved to Le Mans.**

**Brann, who have struggled this season, recently parted company with assistant coach Espen Steffensen but let Mons Ivar Mjelde carry on as head coach.**

**Fredrik Winsnes has earned a national team recall following some great form for Stromsgodset. The 33-year-old midfielder, a qualified doctor, is set to quit football next year to take up his other profession.**

**Sigurd Odegaard**

Copenhagen, here I come...Wiland

SWEDEN

# Drain to Denmark

AN INCREASING number of players are leaving the Swedish League to play in Denmark, a blow to the domestic game as well as a dent to pride, since Denmark is Sweden's oldest and fiercest enemy in football.

But there is little local clubs can do to stop the player drain. Denmark's tax rates are lower than Sweden's, and the players perceive the Danish League to be closer to Europe's football mainstream than the Allsvenskan.

FC Copenhagen signed Kalmar's Brazilian midfielder Cesar Santin, probably the Swedish League's biggest attraction, and Halmstads' Peter Larsson, viewed by many as Sweden's most promising defender. Elfsborg's Johan Wiland, the best keeper in the Allsvenskan, is also set to join Copenhagen at the start of next year.

Ironically, the man of the moment in Sweden is Danish striker Kim Olsen, who hit a hat-trick for lowly Orebro in a 4-2 win over champions IFK Gothenburg.

Christian Wilhelmsson's move to Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia has raised doubts about his national team future.

**Pentti Hietanen**

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

# Big on Blazevic

Weighty matters...Blazevic acknowledged a problem with his personal image

**THE WHOLE country is enraptured by the appointment of Miroslav Blazevic as national team coach, and the former Croatia boss has appeared in numerous interviews on TV and in newspapers.**

**Blazevic's biggest achievement so far has been to persuade all but one of the players who had been boycotting the national team in protest at the way the FA is being run to return to the fold. "Everyone changed their minds when they heard my arguments," Blazevic said. "I still have to talk to goalkeeper Kenan Hasagic because he has been unreachable on the phone."**

**The 73-year-old also caused a stir by saying that the national team would be playing home games all over Bosnia-Herzegovina, not just in Sarajevo and Zenica, as in the past.**

**Blazevic, who took Croatia to third place at France 98, has received ovations whenever he has attended national league games, except in Mostar for the Zrinjski v Borac tie, where he was heckled by fans of the hosts, a Croatian side.**

**Blazevic shrugged off the abuse saying: "My biggest problem is my weight. I'm 173cm [5ft 8in] but have reached 90kg [14st] and I urgently need to get slimmer, at least 7kg [15lbs]. When I appear on the bench, I don't want people to see an old man with a belly, but a true athlete. That's why I've stopped eating my favourite food – chocolate."**

**Zdravko Reic**

ALBANIA

### Pay dispute rocks Partizani

Partizani Tirana have gone into meltdown, losing several first-team players who have not been paid and losing to Bosnian side Siroki Brijeg in the UEFA Cup first qualifying round.

Paulin Dhembi refused to take part in the tie because, he said, he had not received his salary for four months. He was later expelled from the team. Bledar Shkembi, another absentee, has begun a complaints procedure against the club for non-payment.

Partizani president Albert Xhani was fuming after the tie, during which he came to blows with his midfielder Gjergji Muzaka, also now released.

"The players sold the match," Xhani claimed. "Those who did will pay the price." Defender Tefik Osmani, among the accused, was sold to rivals FK Tirana two days later.

For several days running, hundreds of Partizani fans gathered in front of the club offices calling for Xhani to go, but the president refused to budge, saying: "It's not their club but mine."

**Gezim Nushi**

*Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums*

SERBIA

### Banat bounced back

The FA controversially decided to reprieve Banat Zrenjanin rather than Smederevo from relegation following Mladost Lucani's withdrawal from the top flight because of financial problems. Smederevo finished one place above and eight points ahead of Banat last season, but the FA said it favoured the latter because Smederevo have poor support from their local community.

Smederevo protested and even asked UEFA for help, but the European body said it trusted the Serbian FA's decision and saw no reason to intervene.

Many believe a factor behind the FA's move was that Smederevo had voted against successful candidate Tomislav Karadzic in the recent election for FA chairman.

**Vladimir Novak**

MONTENEGRO

### You're barred!

Fans of champions Buducnost have said they will impose a curfew on the squad after two players were spotted in a pub on the evening after the team lost 2-1 to Grbalj in the opening league round.

Gustavo Lopez and Marinho were given a talking to by members of the Varvari (barbarians) ultras group, who announced that they would be conducting further "inspections" of Podgorica's bars and cafes. The supporters, unhappy with the result and the team's performance, said they would not allow players to be in such places after 9.30pm.

Buducnost had gone into the Grbalj game on the back of defeat by Tampere United of Finland in the Champions League first qualifying round. Zeta and Mogren also fell in the UEFA Cup.

**Vladimir Novak**

SLOVENIA

### Skocic walks

Dragan Skocic quit as coach of cup-holders Interblock citing player antagonism during a troubled start to the new league campaign.

"The situation was impossible," said Skocic, whose side picked up only two points from their first four games. "At every moment I felt the players' hostility on my neck. It's also ugly that some of them accused me of racism."

The latter comment referred to a clash with Togolese Erik Akoto. Skocic had accused him of being lazy during training, but Akoto claimed the coach had not played him because he is black.

Skocic's replacement is Italian Alberto Bigon, formerly in charge of Napoli during the Diego Maradona era and recently at the helm of Swiss club Sion.

Nedjeljko Gugolj, Slovenia's best ever coach and one of its leading defenders, has died aged 76.

**Zdravko Reic**

CROATIA

### Dinamo up and away

Champions Dinamo Zagreb made a fine start to their title defence, winning their first three games despite the sale of best player Luka Modric to Tottenham and two other first-team regulars, Ognjen Vukojevic (Dynamo Kyiv) and Hrvoje Cale (Trabzonspor).

The League is to be expanded to 16 clubs from 12 from next season.

**Zdravko Reic**

MACEDONIA

### End for Baskimi

Baskimi withdrew from the top division two days before kick-off because of financial problems. They have now been absorbed into fellow top-flight side Milano, also from Kumanovo. The campaign started with 11 clubs instead of 12 and only one will be relegated.

All the European representatives were eliminated in their first game. Rabotnicki lost to Inter Baku of Azerbaijan in the Champions League, and Milano and Pelister both lost to Cypriot teams – Omonia and APOEL respectively – in the UEFA Cup.

**Michel Stojmanovski**

ISRAEL

### Turmoil at Beitar

Beitar Jerusalem were thrust into turmoil by their humiliating 6-2 aggregate defeat by Wisla Krakow in the Champions League second qualifying round. Technical manager Giora Spiegel quit, and Beitar's Russia-born billionaire owner Arkady Gaydamak recalled the club's former coach Luis Fernandez, with incumbent Yitzhak Shum agreeing to work alongside the Frenchman. It is the second season running Beitar have made an early exit from Europe.

**Ori Lewis**

MALTA

### Valletta superior

Champions Valletta won the first silverware of the season, beating cup holders Birkirkara 2-0 in the Super Cup.

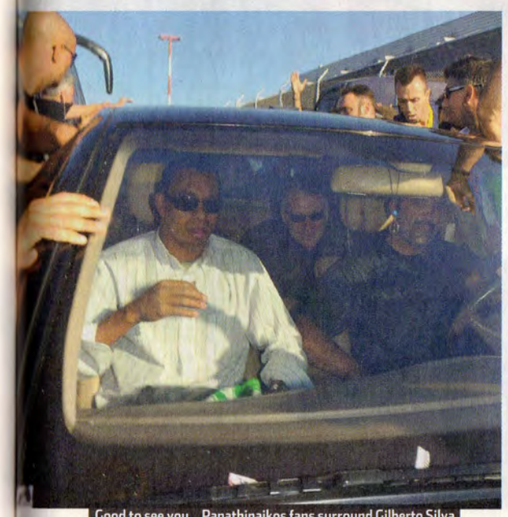
Both sides fell at the first hurdle in Europe, Valletta losing to Slovakia's Artmedia Petrzalka in the Champions League and Birkirkara falling to Hajduk Split in the UEFA Cup. Marsaxlokk also exited early from the latter competition, to another Croatian side, Slaven Belupo.

**Domenico Aquilina**

Fisticuffs...Ibrahim Toraman

GREECE

# Latin influence


Good to see you...Panathinaikos fans surround Gilberto Silva

**THE TOP DIVISION will have a distinctly Latin American flavour this season after the arrival of players from Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Uruguay.**

**The most recent was veteran Peru midfielder Nolberto Solano at Larisa from West Ham.**

**Champions Olympiakos brought in two South Americans in 24 hours – Brazilian midfielder Dudu Cearense (from CSKA Moscow) and Argentinian winger Sebastian Leto (on loan from Liverpool).**

**Dudu, on a salary of £1.2million a season for his three-year contract, said it was the decision of compatriot midfielder Gilberto Silva to move to Greece, to Panathinaikos from Arsenal, that persuaded him to sign up, too. "He told me he has had a pleasant surprise in Greece and suggested I come," Dudu said.**

**Gilberto, who received a noisy welcome at Athens airport, is joined at Panathinaikos by another Brazilian, right-back Gabriel from Fluminense.**

**Both Salonika sides have taken on a Uruguayan international – midfielder Pablo Garcia is at PAOK (on loan from Real Madrid), winger Mario Regueiro at Aris (on loan from Valencia).**

**Lou Economopoulos**

TURKEY

# Pressure point

THE PRESSURE was on Turkey's big two, Galatasaray and Fenerbahce, to reach the Champions League group stage because of the minimum £12million income it generates.

Galatasaray, who faced Steaua Bucharest in the third qualifying round, have spent almost £24m on transfers, while Fenerbahce, up against Partizan Belgrade, were also big spenders this summer and were still looking for another striker.

Besiktas have finally forgiven captain Ibrahim Toraman and former captain Ibrahim Uzulmez for fighting during a training camp. The pair were fined but removed from the transfer list.

**Mehmet Demircan**

CZECH REPUBLIC

# Rada comes centre stage

**PETR RADA, assistant to outgoing national coach Karel Bruckner, has been given the top job. The 49-year-old unexpectedly received the backing of nine of the 13-man FA executive committee to see off the candidacy of Jozef Chovanec, Bruckner's predecessor, who won just two votes.**

**As assistant national coach Rada had also been in charge of top division Teplice but he has now given up that position. Former reserve team coach Jiri Plisek has replaced him.**

**German Klaus Toppmoller withdrew his application for the national team position before the vote since he objected to FA demands that he live in the Czech Republic and appoint Czech assistants if he got the job.**

**Rada has appointed Mlada Boleslav coach Pavel Hapal and Viktoria Plzen coach Jaroslav Silhavy as his assistants.**

**It had been thought Bruckner was going into retirement so it was some surprise when he was unveiled as Austria's national team coach.**

**Czech international forward David Lafata has returned to Jablonec from Austria Wien. Champions Slavia Prague have signed Slovak international midfielder Peter Grajciar from Nitra.**

**Referee Jan Jilek was suspended for three games because of errors during Sparta's game against Mlada Boleslav on the League's opening day. According to the FA disciplinary commission, Jilek failed to adequately punish Sparta defender Tomas Repka for two serious fouls.**

**Sam Beckwith**

Crest of a wave...Rada has been promoted





POLAND

## Delay after ups and downs

The start of the season was postponed for two weeks following the decision of the Polish Olympic Committee's arbitration tribunal, the country's highest sports court, to elevate Widzew Lodz into the second division from the third. The club, who finished in the top flight relegation zone last season, had initially been demoted two divisions by the FA's disciplinary commission after being found guilty of match-fixing. But Widzew had the punishment lifted on appeal.

The tribunal's verdict gave hope to two other clubs, Korona Kielce and Zaglebie Lubin, who had also been demoted from the top flight for match-fixing. They both decided to appeal, and the League's governing body, Ekstraklasa SA, decided to delay the start of competition until the tribunal's final decision in order to prevent confusion.

In the event, the tribunal upheld the decision to demote Korona and Zaglebie.

There were other machinations, however. Polonia Warsaw, who finished only seventh in the second division last term, are now back in the top flight having bought out Groclin Dyskobolia Grodzisk, who finished third in the top division last season.

**Dariusz Kurowski**

ROMANIA

## Stoica's inglorious end

Stefan Stoica was the first coach to be dismissed this new season after Gloria Buzau lost their first three matches and failed even to score.

Steaua Bucharest have signed Colombian midfielder Juan Toja from Dallas as part of a record £15.7m outlay on new players this summer. Other signings include Greek striker Pantelis Kapetanos (AEK Athens), Portuguese Tiago Gomes (Estrela Amadora, loan) and Brazilian striker Arthuro (Alaves).

**Radu Timofte**

BULGARIA

## Game's up for Vutsov

Levski Sofia coach Velislav Vutsov quit under pressure from fans and president Todor Batkov after the team lost 1-0 at home to BATE Borisov of Belarus in the Champions League third qualifying round first leg. Levski had also lost their opening league game, 1-0 at home to Vihren. Forward Georgi Ivanov, newly arrived back at the club, missed a penalty in both games.

The fans turned on Vutsov during the BATE game, shouting: "Resign, resign." Afterwards, Batkov asked him: "Will you resign or do I have to sack you?" Vutsov took the former route.

Assistant coach Emil Velev has taken temporary charge.

**Rumen Paytashev**

BELARUS

## Life ban for drunk ref

FIFA referee Sergey Shmolik has been banned for life for being drunk as he officiated a league match between Vitebsk and Naftan. The inspector of the game, Nikolay Metelsky, also received a life ban.

Shmolik claimed his erratic behaviour during the match was due to back spasms and that he drank vodka and gin after the final whistle to ease the pain.

**Oleg Zadernovsky**

HUNGARY

## Comeback starts here

Record champions Ferencvaros got off to a fine start in their third season in the second division with a 6-2 thrashing of Tokol. The eagerness to finally win promotion is palpable under new owner Kevin McCabe. The Englishman, also chairman of Sheffield United, has put the slogan "ComeBack" on players' shirts, on a huge banner above the home end at the stadium and on the cover of the club's official magazine.

Ferencvaros were demoted in 2006 because of huge debts.

**Peterjon Cresswell**

UKRAINE

# Big two stutter

**THE START of the season was notable for the poor showing of both the country's big two, champions Shakhtar Donetsk and Dynamo Kyiv.**

**Shakhtar were outplayed during their 2-0 defeat at promoted Lviv in the first league game and were then held to draws at both Karpaty (1-1) and Dnipro (0-0).**

**Dynamo lost 2-1 at home to Metalist in the third round and then managed only a 2-2 draw at Vorskla, having just squeezed through against Irish side Drogheda in the Champions League second qualifying round. After winning the first leg 2-1 away, Dynamo were on the brink of catastrophe in the return. Drogheda had scored in the 88th minute to pull level at 2-2 on the night but then Ollie Cahill missed a golden chance to score to put his team through on away goals.**

**"You can't imagine how many sedatives I took in the final minutes," said Dynamo president Ihor Surkis. "Our players suddenly lost composure and were helpless during the late pressure from Drogheda. The quality of our game was very poor."**

**Dnipro's industrialist owner Ihor Kolomoysky has bankrolled the biggest purchases of the summer in Ukraine. International midfielder Maxim Kalinichenko has returned after eight years at Spartak Moscow, and Ukraine forward Olexiy Bielik has joined from Shakhtar, where he had been sidelined by coach Mircea Lucescu. The third big arrival was Brazilian defender Alcides, from PSV Eindhoven.**

**Oleg Zadernovsky**

Close call...Dynamo (in white) nearly lost to Drogheda

Vow to return...Titov

RUSSIA

# Legend Titov leaves Spartak

SPARTAK MOSCOW legend Yegor Titov has left for struggling top-flight side Khimki in one of the most sensational transfers in Russian football history. The former international midfielder made the move after being dropped from the first team, along with Ukrainian international midfielder Maxim Kalinichenko, following Spartak's humiliating 5-1 home defeat by arch-rivals CSKA in July.

The scapegoating caused a wave of protest from Spartak fans and as a result general director Sergei Shavlo was forced to step down. He was replaced by Valeri Karpin, the former Russia and Spartak midfielder. But it did not bring Titov back.

The 32-year-old joined the red-and-whites' academy aged seven and helped the club win six straight league titles in the 1990s. His parting shot to the fans was "I will be back", clearly hinting that he plans to return as coach.

Ironically, Titov probably had his best season with Spartak last year, his performances at least comparable to those in 1998 and 2000, when he was voted Russian player of the year.

Spartak, who are frustrated at not having won the Russian title since 2001, attempted to plug the creativity gap created by Titov's departure by signing Russian international midfielder or forward Ivan Saenko from Nurnberg.

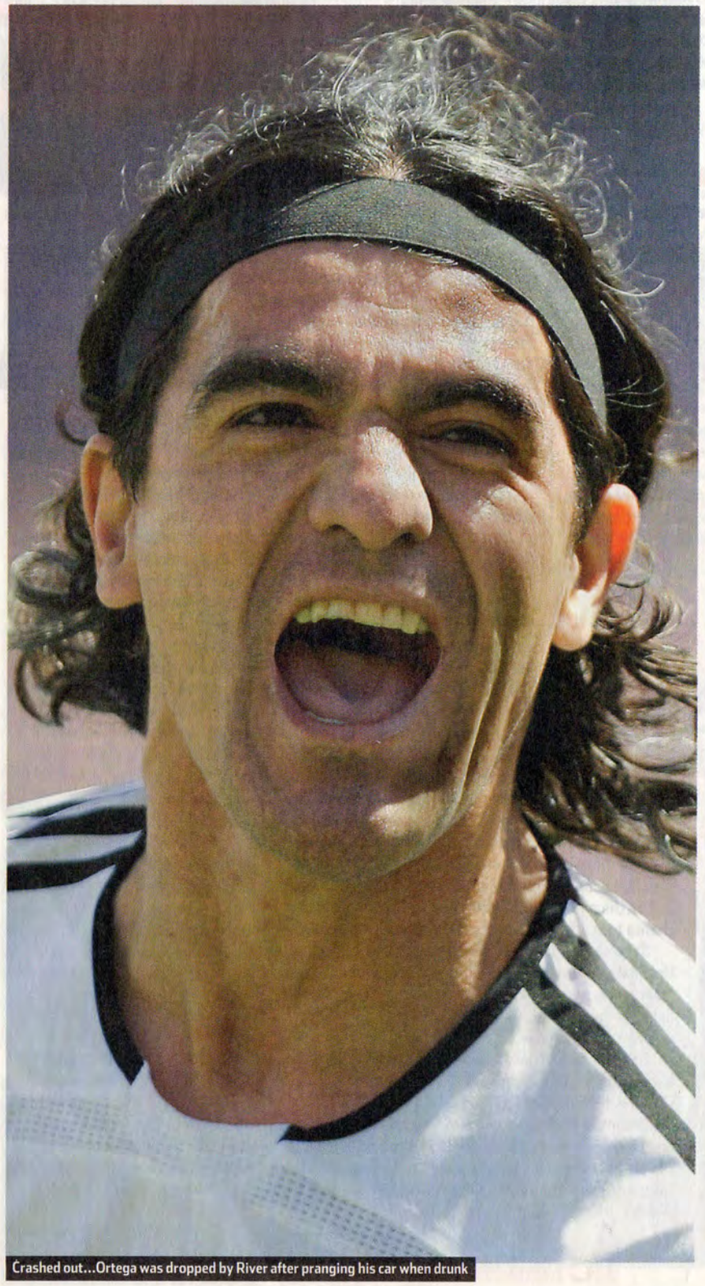
Kalinichenko has returned to Ukraine with Dnipro.

**Victor Gusev**

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

ARGENTINA

# River stay strong


Crashed out...Ortega was dropped by River after pranging his car when drunk

**THERE WERE no fewer than 311 player changes at the 20 top division clubs during the close season but, for once, River Plate did not sell their best players for big fees to Europe.**

**The main departure from the closing championship winners was keeper Juan Pablo Carizzo to Lazio, and he had actually been sold to the Rome club last year, but was loaned back to River while trying to get an EU passport (which, in the end, he did not manage).**

**Also, River have allowed veteran forward Ariel Ortega to go on loan to second division Independiente Rivadavia. Although the former international is idolised by the fans, he has a drink problem that kept him from attending training several times last season. River twice sent him to a rehabilitation centre.**

**On top of that, Ortega complained that he was not being given enough first-team games. But the final straw was when he was filmed leaving a nightclub at 6am and then crashed his car, drunk again. After that, coach Diego Simeone refused to have him in the squad.**

**Boca Juniors, who finished second in the closing campaign, four points behind their eternal rivals, made no real effort to strengthen their ageing side. They added only one forward – Damian Diaz from Rosario Central – while two (fairly) regulars, midfielder Pablo Ledesma and striker Mauro Boselli left.**

**Racing Club, who salvaged their top-flight place via the relegation/promotion play-offs, continued to lose players – most notably keeper Hilario Navarro and striker Facundo Sava – not least because they owe them money.**

**These numerous team changes seldom make teams stronger and they certainly won't in San Lorenzo's case – former internationals Andres D'Alessandro and Diego Placente left for Internacional and Bordeaux respectively, while promising defender Jonathan Bottinelli is now at Sampdoria. The return from Olympiakos of Cristian Ledesma, a member of San Lorenzo's 2007 closing championship-winning team, will hardly make up for the losses.**

**Once again, Argentina has exported goals. The leading scorers of last season's opening and closing tournaments – Independiente's German Denis and Banfield's Dario Cvitanich – have both moved to Europe, to Napoli and Ajax respectively.**

**This season, the top division clubs will have to travel more than ever. Although the number of provincial clubs, outside Buenos Aires province, has remained at six, the two promoted clubs – San Martin (Tucuman) and Godoy Cruz (Mendoza) – are further away than the two relegated ones, Olimpo Bahia Blanca and San Juan's San Martin.**

**The leaders of the clubs' hooligan gangs – with the notable exception of River and Boca – have signed a "peace pact" and agreed for members to be used to keep order at stadiums.**

**Eric Weil**





CANADA

## Impact usurp Toronto

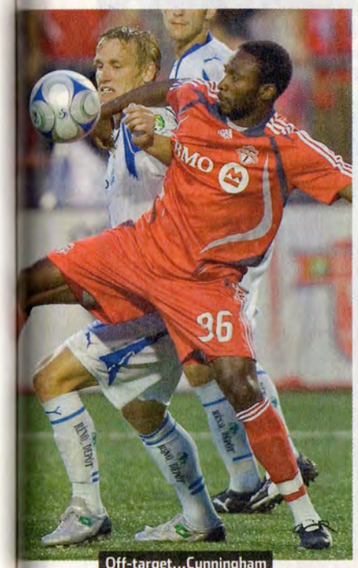
THE INAUGURAL Canada Championship tournament was meant to be the crowning moment for Major League Soccer side Toronto as the Great White North's "king of the soccer hill", but second tier Montreal Impact spoiled the moment by holding them to a 1-1 draw and clinching the title.

The result meant Impact, of the United Soccer Leagues First Division, went into the CONCACAF Champions League.

Toronto's failure to progress, which came during a dreadful run of MLS results, prompted them to offload striker Jeff Cunningham, who had been under fire for weeks because of his lack of goals. "I don't know how this guy managed to score 99 times in his career," snapped coach John Carver after the Impact game.

Impact's presence in continental competition will bolster their candidacy to join Toronto in MLS. That League, the North American top flight, has set October 15 as the deadline for clubs and cities to submit their bid for the next round of expansion, expected in 2011. Impact are up against Vancouver Whitecaps – the other side in the Canadian Championship, a round-robin event – Ottawa and several US concerns.

**Philippe Germain**


Off-target...Cunningham

Naturalised...Augusto (right) trains with Mexican national team-mates Carlos Vela and Rafael Marquez

MEXICO

## Sven's selection storm

**NATIONAL COACH Sven Goran Eriksson kicked up a storm when he named naturalised pair Matias Vuoso (born in Argentina) and Leandro Augusto (born in Brazil) in his first squad.**

**"Personally, I don't like them picking players who are not Mexicans by birth," said former national coach Enrique Meza. "I know my spell as coach was very bad, but I still think the same way."**

**Striker Jared Borgetti, who criticised the decision to appoint Eriksson in the first place, joined in the attack. "Imagine if, one day, there are 11 naturalised players, it's going to be a little difficult to accept," he said.**

**Mexican football attracts plenty of foreign players and they need to live in the country for only three years before they can obtain nationality. This means that dozens are eligible to play. The last World Cup squad included two naturalised players – Brazil-born Antonio Naelson and Argentina-born Guillermo Franco.**

**But Decio di Maria, general secretary of the Mexican federation, said Eriksson can pick as many overseas-born players as he likes. "I don't know of a valid limit, all they need is quality and commitment," he said. "In the last few months, four have been picked, but the list of eligible players is long.**

**"We just ask them to put on the shirt and defend it. At the end of the day, the 11 best play."**

**Vuoso shrugged it all off. "People are entitled to their opinions. It's their problem. I'm going to do the same as I do with my club [Santos Laguna] and concentrate on the game," he said.**

**Eriksson said: "I'm Swedish, I'm not Mexican, and for me it's very easy: players who have a Mexican passport have civil rights in this country. They also have the right to play football for Mexico, if they can play well enough."**

**Brian Homewood**

PERU

### Fans beat up ref

Referee Hector Pacheco was beaten up in his dressing room by a group of Alianza Lima fans, who had just seen their side lose 2-1 at home to Coronel Bolognesi. The thugs reportedly also vandalised his car.

Alianza were given an indefinite home ban by the Peruvian League after referees said they would not officiate at their Matute stadium, which is in one of the roughest areas of the capital.

"Maybe, for many sporting directors, who justify the actions of their supporters, physical aggression doesn't mean anything," said Winston Reategui, president of the referees' association. "But we won't let this pass. They have to be able to respect the principal of authority."

There was further trouble for Alianza on and off the field. They finished only 11th out of 14 in the opening championship and fired seven players for going on a drinking spree on the eve of an important game.

**Brian Homewood**

*Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums*

AFC CHALLENGE CUP

# India's summer

INDIA'S LONG stint in the football wilderness has come to an end after Englishman Bob Houghton steered them to victory in the AFC Challenge Cup and a place in the 2011 Asian Cup finals.

Asian Football Confederation president Mohamed Bin Hammam decreed earlier in the year that the winners of the Challenge Cup – essentially a developmental tournament for middle-ranking Asian nations – would enter the continent's main international competition, and India are the first beneficiaries.

Sunil Chhetri scored a hat-trick as the hosts defeated defending champions Tajikistan 4-1 in the rain-delayed Final in Hyderabad. India thus join hosts Qatar, defending champions Iraq, runners-up Saudi Arabia and third-placed South Korea among the qualifiers for the Asian Cup, in which the Indians have not appeared since 1984.

"Tonight was not about tactics or team plans but it was all about a team's desire to win," said Houghton, who led Malmo to the European Cup Final in 1979. "It was one of those performances that is the culmination of a lot of hard work. The boys have been together now for a long time. They've played a lot of matches and they trained very hard.

"They deserve the win. It was a good team effort and there were some really good individual performances."

Cricket is the most popular sport in India but football has a long history in the country. India was one of the founding members of the AFC, in 1954, it has the oldest league in Asia, and the national team won the gold medal at the Asian Games in 1951 and again in 1962. Also, they were invited to take part in the 1950 World Cup in Brazil but declined.

Indian football has had little to proclaim over the past 40 years, apart from a minor resurgence in the early 1980s, which included that 1984 Asian Cup appearance.

But the country has seen improvement as more money has flowed in. The newly professional I-League, funded by one of the nation's leading television stations, is in its second year. And champions Dempo have reached the quarter-finals of the AFC Cup, the competition for clubs from lower-ranked nations.

An increase in finances has also allowed the Indians to bring in such an experienced operator as Houghton.

The former China and Uzbekistan manager has shown throughout his career that he has the ability to bring the best out of underperforming players. He has done so again in India, reviving the career of influential captain Baichung Bhutia after he planned to quit under the previous management set-up.

Michael Church

Full of cheer...the India squad celebrate their AFC Challenge Cup success

Equaliser...Tanaka secured Urawa Reds a point in the big league clash

JAPAN

# Reds rein in Antlers

THE BIG LEAGUE showdown between champions Kashima Antlers, the hosts, and 2006 winners Urawa Reds ended 1-1. Play was interrupted by a thunderstorm midway through the second half. Mitsuo Ogasawara put Antlers in front directly after play resumed; Tatsuya Tanaka equalised with eight minutes to go.

The result left Antlers three points clear of their rivals but Reds narrowed the gap by a point two weeks later when drawing 2-2 at home to Kashiwa Reysol as Antlers surprisingly lost 3-1 at bottom side JEF United.

There has been a fresh influx of Brazilians this summer, including midfield trio Marcinho (to Antlers from Cruzeiro), Vitor Junior (to Kawasaki Frontale from Santos) and Rodrigo (to Jubilo Iwata from Strasbourg).

Two Brazilian strikers have left Japan. Bare, second in the league scorers' chart, quit Gamba Osaka for Al Ahli of the United Arab Emirates, while Tokyo Verdy's Hulk, who hit a remarkable 37 goals during the club's run to promotion last term, has joined Porto.

The J.League is aiming to introduce big changes from the 2010 season. Proposals under consideration include the release of domestic players once their contracts are up (the Bosman ruling is not currently in effect in Japan) and the conversion to a European-style autumn-to-spring season instead of the current March-to-December format. The latter move is suggested in order to facilitate international transfers, fit in more easily with the international calendar and avoid games being played in the heat of the summer.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

## ROUND-UP

### ASIA

● Customs Club beat arch-rivals Commerce 1-0 in the MYANMAR Cup Final following three successive defeats in the decider.

● Binh Duong retained the league title in VIETNAM. They won it with a game to spare after a 4-0 home victory over Bin Dinh Qui Nhon.

Azam Mahmood

### OCEANIA

● Ba beat Labasa 2-1 in the Final of FIJI'S Battle of the Giants event. Ba went ahead in the 10th minute from an own goal by defender Samuela Kautoga but had to wait until the 80th minute to get their second, from Maciu Dunadamu's spectacular strike. Henry Dwyer scored a consolation in the dying moments.

● In NEW ZEALAND, Aaron Burgess scored a hat-trick as Dunedin Technical beat Glenfield Rovers 3-2 in a thrilling Chatham Cup semi-final. In the other tie, East Coast Bays beat Nelson Suburbs 2-1 to reach the Final for the first time.

Paul Moon

AUSTRALIA

# Theoklitos inspires Victory

AN INSPIRED performance by Michael Theoklitos, one of Australia's most under-rated goalkeepers, made the difference as Melbourne Victory overcame hosts Wellington Phoenix on penalties in the A-League Pre-Season Cup Final.

Theoklitos made two superlative saves during the scoreless 90 minutes and then secured the trophy by saving in the sudden death phase of the shoot-out.

Neither side shone in the League last season. Victory finished only fifth, Phoenix bottom. The New Zealanders' improvement can be attributed to some wise signings in the close season. Australian defender Jon McKain has extensive experience of the Romanian top flight, while winger Leo Bertos is back in his home city after seven years overseas, the majority in England.

Paul Moon

Super saver...Theoklitos wins the day

WAFF CHAMPIONSHIP

### A+ for Iran B

Hosts Iran claimed the West Asian Football Federation title for a fourth time with a 2-1 win over Jordan in the Final.

Hadi Aghili put Iran ahead from the spot in the 25th minute. Amir Deeb equalised 10 minutes from time but Kianoosh Rahmati grabbed the winner with five minutes to go.

"It was a very difficult game," said coach Ali Daei, the former Iran striker who had selected only a second string squad for the tournament. "But we gave a good performance and had more possession than Jordan."

Michael Church

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

EGYPT

# Hurrah for Jose

IN MANUEL JOSE'S native country, Portugal, they like to call him King of Africa because of his exploits as coach of Cairo big guns Al Ahly. In Africa, such monikers are never given to foreigners, but there is certainly grudging respect for the former Benfica boss.

Jose, who has led Ahly to three of their five African Champions League titles, has just signed a one-year extension as he aims to take the club to a record sixth triumph in November.

The club were on the brink of achieving it last year but had a distinctly off-night in the Final second leg in Cairo against Etoile Sahel of Tunisia. Ahly had drawn 0-0 in Sousse in the opening tie but went down 3-1 in the return. And there was personal abuse for the coach, the home fans throwing cans and spitting at him as he walked up the steps at the national stadium to pick up his loser's medal.

Jose was shocked that the fans turned on him with such viciousness, having led the club to no fewer than 14 trophies (the three Champions Leagues, three Egyptian league titles, two Egyptian Cups, three Egyptian Super Cups and three African Super Cups).

For several days he considered his position and flew home to Portugal for a break, but on his return there were thousands at Cairo airport to welcome him home and ask for forgiveness. That touch of Arabic hospitality warmed the heart of the 62-year-old, who has since added another domestic championship and Egyptian Super Cup to his CV.

But the Champions League is the overriding priority. "My team are going to be great again this season," predicts Jose, whose policy of buying the best players in the Egyptian market has brought so much success.

Mohamed Barakat and Mohamed Aboutraika have now been joined by two more Egyptian internationals, Sayed Moawad and Ahmed Hassan, Egypt's influential captain who chose Ahly over arch-rivals Zamalek when he decided to quit Anderlecht.

Ahly made a good start, beating Zamalek and Dynamos of Zimbabwe at home and holding top Ivorian side ASEC to a draw in Abidjan.

Mark Gleeson

Smile for the cameras...a happy Jose after the recent Egyptian Super Cup win

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

# Field of vision

First through...Nigeria booked their passage with two games to spare

THE MAJORITY of the field for the last phase of Africa's World Cup qualifying section should be decided in early September in the penultimate round of second stage group games. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mali, Morocco and Senegal will all progress if they win their match, and minnows such as the Cape Verde Islands, Kenya and Libya also have a good chance of upsetting the odds and advancing to the final 20.

Nigeria, who failed to reach the last World Cup, are the only side definitely through to the final qualifying stage, having won all four matches so far.

Angola and Togo, two teams who did reach Germany 2006, are in danger of missing out. Togo, the surprise package of the last qualifiers, will effectively be out if they lose away in Zambia. Angola must get something from their match in Benin to keep their hopes alive.

African champions Egypt are also far from out of the woods, since they face group leaders Democratic Republic of Congo in Kinshasa.

Mark Gleeson

SENEGAL

### What a difference a Dia makes

FIFA allowed Issiar Dia to switch his national status – from France to Senegal – with almost indecent haste, having previously insisted that there be a "cycle of competition" between the change.

One weekend, the Nancy winger was playing for France's Under-21 side, the next he was making his debut for the west Africans in a World Cup qualifier against Gambia.

Dia is yet another of the African Diaspora in France to seek an international career with the country of his parents. The 21-year-old was born in France, in Sevres, but did not take much convincing to throw in his lot with the Lions of Teranga, even though he was a regular member of the French Under-21s.

France's loss is Senegal's gain because Dia's talent and pace is such that he has even been compared to Franck Ribery.

Mark Gleeson

Northern lights...Padania celebrate their trophy win

Photo: Nelson Sternot

# Forza Padania

PADANIA, of northern Italy, won the second Viva World Cup for non-FIFA-affiliated teams, which was staged in Swedish Lapland. They beat a team of Aramean-Syriac players from Sweden 2-0 in the Final at Gallivare in front of 600 fans.

This edition was better organised, had more teams (five as opposed to three) and was more competitive than the inaugural tournament, staged in Hyeres in southern France in 2006. Hosts Sami – the preferred name of the Laplanders – finished only third, having beaten an amateur Monaco representative side 21-1 in the Final of the first edition.

The teams played in a single round-robin group, with the top two meeting in the Final. Padania, who are promoted by the political party Lega Nord, which wants autonomy for the northern part of Italy, came through with a 100 per cent record. They saw off the Aramean-Syriacs in the Final with goals in the first 12 minutes from Gordan Ligarotti and Alberto Colombo. The Arameans were on top throughout the second half but could not find a way back. Sweden has a population of around 100,000 Arameans, a people originating from the region around the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in the Middle East.

The tournament organisers, the New Federation Board, took advantage of the light nights by scheduling the opening game to kick off at 11pm. Sami were held to a 2-2 draw by Kurdistan in front of a crowd of 1,300. Both sides were under strength because the finals clashed with fixtures in the Norwegian and Iraqi leagues, from which the teams usually draw several players.

More than half of the 70,000 Sami live in Norway. Kurdish side Arbil won the Iraqi League in 2007 and played in this year's Asian Champions League but only Didar Hamed and Emad Saad Salih from the club went to Gallivare. Instead, the bulk of the team came from European clubs, such as FC Copenhagen captain Mahmoud Ahmad.

Kurdistan met the Sami again in the third-place play-off, having finished third and fourth respectively in the group. This time the hosts won, 3-1. The fifth team, Provence, were the whipping boys, losing all their games. The players, drawn from the Eole Sports club, went down 6-1 to Padania in their first game and also lost heavily, 5-0, to the Arameans.

Steve Menary

*Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums*

# INTERNATIONALS

## WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

### CONCACAF
### 3rd stage

**Group 1**

*Aug 20 - Havana*
**Cuba 1** (Marquez 88)
**Trinidad & Tobago 3** (Daniel 22, 61, Glen 69)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
**Cuba:** Quintero - Minoso, Marquez, Clavelo, Villegas (Cervantes 59), Linares, Munoz (Faife 81), Francisco, Colome, Fernandez, Cordovez (Duarte 57).
**Trinidad & Tobago:** Phillip - Leon, A John, M Hislop, Lawrence, Birchall (Hyland 39), C Gray, Wolfe, Theobald (Roberts 67), Glen (Telesford 73), Daniel. *Sent off: Hyland 71min.*

*Aug 20 - Guatemala City*
**Guatemala 0**
**United States 1** (Bocanegra 70)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 26,000. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
**Guatemala:** Trigueno - Flores, Gallardo, G Cabrera, M Rodriguez, Ruiz, Garcia (Castrillo 67), Ramirez, L Rodriguez, Thompson (Marquez 66), Contreras (Papa 75). *Sent off: G Cabrera 63min.*
**United States:** Howard - Bocanegra, Mastroeni (Edu 78), Onyewu, Cherundolo, Lewis (Hejduk 66), Dempsey (Beasley 66), Donovan, Ching, Bradley, Pearce. *Sent off: Cherundolo 60min.*

**WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 3RD STAGE – GP 1**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trinidad & Tob | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| United States | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Guatemala | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Cuba | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |

**Group 2**

*Aug 20 - Toronto*
**Canada 1** (De Guzman 47)
**Jamaica 1** (A Williams 52)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
**Canada:** Onstad - Klukowski, Hastings, De Guzman, Stalteri, Bernier (Hume 65), Serioux, Friend (Gerba 77), Radzinski, Hutchinson, De Rosario.
**Jamaica:** Ricketts - Woodbine, J Taylor, Goodison, E Taylor, A Williams (Shelton 63), Phillips (Hue 90), Wolfe (Cummings 87), Gardner, Austin, Burton.

*Aug 20 - Mexico City*
**Mexico 2** (Pardo 73, 75)
**Honduras 1** (De Leon 35)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 81,100. **Ref:** Aguilar (ElS)
**Mexico:** O Sanchez - Magallon, Salcido, Marquez, Osorio, Pardo, Vela (Bravo 61), Augusto, Arce (Blanco 70), Giovani (Franco 56), Guardado.
**Honduras:** N Valladares - E Izaguirre, Figueroa, Bernardez, Mendoza, Guevara, W Palacios, D Suazo, De Leon (Costly 85), Alvarez (Garcia 81), Turcios (Guerrero 69). *Sent off: Figueroa 76min.*

**WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 3RD STAGE – GP 2**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mexico | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Canada | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Jamaica | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Honduras | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

**Group 3**

*Aug 20 - San Jose*
**Costa Rica 1** (Saborio pen 48)
**El Salvador 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 27,000. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
**Costa Rica:** R Gonzalez - Montero (J Drummond 67), Diaz, Borges, A Solis (L Gonzalez 87), Saborio, Centeno, Ruiz (Ledezma 46), Segares, Wallace, A Alpizar. *Sent off: Saborio 81min.*
**El Salvador:** Montes - Gonzalez, Anaya, Martin, Sanchez, Coreas (Reyes 84), Quintanilla, Salazar, Corrales (Zelaya 73), Pacheco (Romero 80), Castillo.

*Aug 20 - Port-au-Prince*
**Haiti 2** (Bertin 90, Fucien 90)
**Surinam 2** (Christoph 33, 45)
**HT:** 0-2. **Att:** 7,800. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
**Haiti:** Fenelon - Alcenat, Frantz (Jean Baptiste 54), Germain, J-J Pierre (Fellingo 74), Bertin, Fucien, Pierre-Louis (Joseph 46), Fabrice, Mones, Sampeur.
**Surinam:** Aloema - Jap a Joe, Garden, Felter, Lupson (Jeroe 59), Van Dijk, Limon (Wiebers 66), Sordam (Valies 78), Sandvliet, Sastromedjo, Christoph.

**WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 3RD STAGE – GP 3**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Costa Rica | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Haiti | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Surinam | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| El Salvador | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

*Top two in each group qualify for 4th and final stage*

### EUROPE

**Group 6**

*Aug 20 - Almaty*
**Kazakhstan 3** (Ostapenko 14, 30, Uzdenov 44)
**Andorra 0**
**HT:** 3-0. **Att:** 7,700. **Ref:** Banari (Mol)
**Kazakhstan:** Loriya - Nurdauletov, Kuchma, Assanbayev (Baizhanov 79), Baltiyev, Uzdenov (Byakov 63), Smakov, Skorykh (Karpovich 68), Ostapenko, Irismetov, Zhumaskaliyev.
**Andorra:** Gomes - Ayala (Escura 14), Bernaus, Vales, A Lima, I Lima, Toscano (J Garcia 72), Pujol (Somoza 82), Silva, Andorra, Vieira.

**WC QUALS: EUROPE – GROUP 6**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kazakhstan | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Belarus | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Croatia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| England | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ukraine | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Andorra | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |

*Group winners qualify for finals. Runners-up (if among the best eight runners-up of the nine groups) will enter play-offs for a place in the finals*

● *See also World Cup qualifying guide, starting page 132*

## AFC CHALLENGE CUP

*In Hyderabad, India*
*(Final and third-place play-off in New Delhi)*

**Group A**

*July 30*
**Turkmenistan 0**
**Tajikistan 0**
**Att:** 150. **Ref:** Kovalenco (Uzb)

*July 30*
**India 1** (Lawrence 90)
**Afghanistan 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** Iemoto (Jap)

*Aug 1*
**Tajikistan 1** (Rabiev 10)
**India 1** (Bhutia 60)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 350. **Ref:** Shamsuzzaman (Ban)

*Aug 1*
**Afghanistan 0**
**Turkmenistan 5** (Ovekov 1, 41, 77, 80, Krendelev 23)
**HT:** 0-3. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Saleem (Mdv)

*Aug 3*
**Turkmenistan 1** (Orazmamedov 83)
**India 2** (Bhutia 53, 80)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Alsenan (UAE)

*Aug 3*
**Afghanistan 0**
**Tajikistan 4** (Rabiev 14, 44, 56, Tukhtasunov 39)
**HT:** 0-2. **Att:** 150. **Ref:** Vo (Vie)

**GROUP A**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| India | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Tajikistan | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 5 |
| Turkmenistan | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| Afghanistan | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 0 |

**Group B**

*July 31*
**North Korea 3** (Peiris og 4, Pak Song-chol 9, 27)
**Sri Lanka 0**
**HT:** 3-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Vo (Vie)

*July 31*
**Myanmar 3** (Yaza Win Thein 66, Myo Min Tun 76, Soe Myat Min 86)
**Nepal 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 150. **Ref:** Alsenan (UAE)

*Aug 2*
**Sri Lanka 1** (Jayasuriya 50)
**Myanmar 3** (Soe Myat Min 47, Yan Paing 69, Si Thu Win 85)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Kovalenko (Uzb)

*Aug 2*
**Nepal 0**
**North Korea 1** (Pak Song-chol 39)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Iemoto (Jap)

*Aug 4*
**North Korea 1** (Ro Hak-su 15)
**Myanmar 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 100. **Ref:** Shamsuzzaman (Ban)

*Aug 4*
**Nepal 3** (Shahukhala 14, Rai 55, Anjan 68)
**Sri Lanka 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Saleem (Mdv)

**GROUP B**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Korea | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 9 |
| Myanmar | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 6 |
| Nepal | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Sri Lanka | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 0 |

**Semi-finals**

*Aug 7*
**India 1** (Chhetri 82)
**Myanmar 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Shamsuzzaman (Ban)

*Aug 7*
**North Korea 0**
**Tajikistan 1** (Muhidinov 39)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 600. **Ref:** Iemoto (Jap)
*Sent off: Pak Nam-chol 88min, Choe Myong-ho 90min (both North Korea)*

**Third-place play-off**

*Aug 13 - New Delhi*
**Myanmar 0**
**North Korea 4** (Pak Song-chol 10, 12, pen 44, Ro Hak-su 53)
**HT:** 0-3. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Alsenan (UAE)
*Sent off: Han Win Aung (Myanmar) 42min*

**Final**

*Aug 13 - New Delhi*
**India 4** (Chhetri 9, 23, 75, Bhutia 18)
**Tajikistan 1** (Fatkhuloev 44)
**HT:** 3-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Kovalenco (Uzb)

*India qualify for 2011 Asian Cup*

## COSAFA CUP

(Council of Southern Africa Football Associations)

*In South Africa*

**Group A**

*In Witbank*

*July 19*
**Madagascar 1** (Rabemananjara 66)
**Swaziland 1** (P Dlamini 42)
**HT:** 0-1

*July 19*
**Mauritius 0**
**Seychelles 7** (Zialor x 4, Annacoura, Laporte, Poiret)

*July 21*
**Madagascar 1** (Rabenandrasana)
**Seychelles 1** (Denis)

*July 21*
**Mauritius 1** (Marmitte 31)
**Swaziland 1** (Mazibuko 51)
**HT:** 1-0

*July 23*
**Madagascar 2** (Rabenandrasana 19, Rabemananjara 68)
**Mauritius 1** (Marquette 12)
**HT:** 1-1

*July 23*
**Swaziland 1** (M Dlamini 90)
**Seychelles 0**
**HT:** 0-0

**GROUP A**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Madagascar | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Swaziland | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Seychelles | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 4 |
| Mauritius | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 1 |

*Madagascar went through on toss of coin*

**Group B**

*In Secunda*

*July 20*
**Malawi 1** (Msowoya 77)
**Lesotho 0**
**HT:** 0-0

*July 20*
**Namibia 3** (Kaimbi 30, Jacobs 50, 70)
**Comoros Islands 0**
**HT:** 1-0

*July 22*
**Malawi 1** (Kondowe 66)
**Comoros Islands 0**
**HT:** 0-0

*July 22*
**Namibia 1** (Ngatjizeko 25)
**Lesotho 1** (Rankara 83)
**HT:** 1-0

*July 24*
**Malawi 0**
**Namibia 1** (Kaimbi 52)
**HT:** 0-0

*July 24*
**Lesotho 1** (Lesesa 74)
**Comoros Islands 0**
**HT:** 0-0

**GROUP B**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Namibia | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Malawi | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Lesotho | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Comoros Is | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 0 |

*Group winners qualified for quarter-finals, to which Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa (holders), Zambia and Zimbabwe received byes*

**Quarter-finals**

*July 26 - Witbank*
**Angola U-20 0**
**Madagascar 1** (Rabemananjara 22)
**HT:** 0-1

*July 26 - Witbank*
**Namibia 0**
**South Africa XI 1** (Mohamutsa 6)
**HT:** 0-1

*July 27 - Secunda*
**Zimbabwe 0**
**Zambia 0**
*Zambia 5-4 on pens*

*July 27 - Secunda*
**Botswana 0**
**Mozambique 2** (Hagi, Nito)

**Semi-finals**

*July 30 - Bushbuckridge*
**South Africa XI 1** (Tsutsulupa 14)
**Zambia 0**
**HT:** 1-0

*July 30 - Bushbuckridge*
**Madagascar 1** (Rabemananjara 24)
**Mozambique 2** (Tico-Tico 14, Hagi 66)
**HT:** 1-1

**Third-place play-off**

*Aug 3 - Bushbuckridge*
**Zambia 2** (Mayuka, Kombe)
**Madagascar 0**

**Final**

*Aug 3 - Bushbuckridge*
**South Africa XI 2** (Fransch 17, 60)
**Mozambique 1** (Txuma 90)
**HT:** 1-0





## WAFF CHAMPIONSHIP

(West Asian Football Federation)

*In Tehran*

**Group A**

*Aug 7*
**Iran 3** (Rahmati pen 28, Rezaei 39, Rafkhaei 87)
**Palestine 0**
**HT:** 2-0

*Aug 9*
**Palestine 0**
**Qatar 1** (Al-Shammari 72)
**HT:** 0-0

*Aug 11*
**Qatar 1** (Mubarak 52)
**Iran 6** (Meydavoudi 10, 90, Al Nameh 33, Aghili pen 49, Hajysafi 62, Rafkhaei 86)
**HT:** 0-2

**GROUP A**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Iran | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 6 |
| Qatar | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 3 |
| Palestine | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

**Group B**

*Aug 7*
**Syria 0**
**Jordan 0**

*Aug 9*
**Oman 1** (Saleh 47)
**Syria 2** (Ibrahim 11, Abadi 71)
**HT:** 0-1

*Aug 11*
**Jordan 3** (Fattah 6, Al-Nawatear 71, 84)
**Oman 1** (Katkut 26)
**HT:** 1-1

**GROUP B**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jordan | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Syria | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Oman | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 0 |

**Semi-finals**

*Aug 13*
**Iran 2** (Rahmati pen 6, Rezaei 52)
**Syria 0**
**HT:** 1-0

*Aug 13*
**Jordan 3** (Al-Shaikh 45, Deeb 71, Al-Saify 90)
**Qatar 0**
**HT:** 1-0

**Final**

*Aug 15*
**Iran 2** (Aghili pen 21, Rahmati 85)
**Jordan 1** (Deeb 82)
**HT:** 1-0

## CONCACAF GOLD CUP QUALIFIERS

### CARIBBEAN ZONE
### 1st stage

**Group A**

*In Willemstad, Dutch Antilles*

*July 27*
**Dutch Antilles 0**
**Aruba 0**
**Att:** 995. **Ref:** Hospedales (T&T)

*July 29*
**Grenada 3** (J Rennie 53, A Modeste 76, S Rennie 79)
**Aruba 1** (Ruiz 50)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 450. **Ref:** Jordan (T&T)
*Sent off: Paesch 75min*

*July 31*
**Dutch Antilles 2** (Bacuna 35, Bicintini 38)
**Grenada 0**
**HT:** 2-0. **Att:** 800. **Ref:** Hospedales (T&T)

**GROUP A – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dutch Antilles | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Grenada | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Aruba | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |

**Group B**

*In Georgetown, Guyana*

*Aug 8*
**Guyana 3** (Codrington 20, 43, Edmonds 36)
**Dominica 0**
**HT:** 3-0. **Att:** 3,000

*Aug 9*
**Surinam 3** (Felter 18, Sandvliet 54, Jap a Joe 84)
**Dominica 1** (Austrie 7)
**HT:** 1-1. **Att:** 175

*Aug 10*
**Guyana 1** (Peters 90)
**Surinam 1** (Sastromedjo 22)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Forde (Bar)

**GROUP B – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guyana | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| Surinam | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Dominica | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 0 |

**Group C**

Antigua & Barbuda
Bermuda
Cayman Islands
Saint-Martin

*To be played in Grand Cayman from August 27-31*

**Group D**

Barbados
British Virgin Islands
St Kitts & Nevis

*To be played in Basseterre, St Kitts from September 24-28*

**Group E**

Anguilla
Martinique
St Vincent & The Grenadines

*To be played in Martinique from September 15-19*

*Group winners and the four runners-up with the best records qualify for 2nd stage, to which Cuba, Guadeloupe and Trinidad & Tobago have received byes. Jamaica and Haiti have byes to the third and final round of qualifiers*

## FRIENDLIES

**Saturday, July 26**

*July 26 - Frisco, USA*
**El Salvador 0**
**Jamaica 0**

**Wednesday, July 30**

*July 30 - Macoya*
**Trinidad & Tobago 2** (K Thomas 62, Glen 70)
**Haiti 0**
**HT:** 0-0

**Wednesday, August 6**

*Aug 6 - Washington DC*
**Guatemala 3** (Pezzarossi 51, Ramirez 56, M Rodriguez 64)
**Bolivia 0**
**HT:** 0-0

**Sunday, August 10**

*Aug 10 - Port-au-Prince*
**Haiti 1** (Fucien 48)
**Trinidad & Tobago 0**
**HT:** 0-0

**Thursday, August 14**

*Aug 14 - Washington DC*
**El Salvador 1** (Castillo 31)
**Trinidad & Tobago 3** (Glen 18, 80, Wolfe 75)
**HT:** 1-1. **Att:** 25,000

**Tuesday, August 19**

*Aug 19 - London*
**Australia 2** (Sterjovski 25, Kennedy 38)
**South Africa 2** (Nkosi 21, Modise 58)
**HT:** 2-1. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
**Australia:** Schwarzer - Neill (Milligan 46), Chipperfield (Carney 46), Culina, McDonald (Holman 46), Wilkshire, Kennedy (Djite 73), Grella (Valeri 62), Coyne, Sterjovski (Garcia 62), Bresciano.
**South Africa:** Khune - Carnell, A Mokoena, Morris, Sibaya, Tshabalala (Moriri 66), Modise, McCarthy (Tsutsulupa 73), Nkosi (Zuma 65), Moon, Dikgacoi (Davids 78).

*Aug 19 - Mantes-la-Ville, France*
**Gabon 1** (Meye 30)
**Mali 0**
**HT:** 1-0

**Wednesday, August 20**

*Aug 20 - Tirana*
**Albania 2** (Hyka 1, Kapllani 18)
**Liechtenstein 0**
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Merio (Slk)
**Albania:** Beqaj - Dallku, Teli, Curri (Bulku 66), Agolli (Lila 55), Cana, Lala (Vangjeli 46), Duro, Skela (Bakaj 46), Hyka, Kapllani (Salihi 55).
**Liechtenstein:** Jehle - Oehri (Bek 45), D'Elia, Burgmeier, Ritzberger, Stocklasa, Biderman (Hasler 62), Gerster (Kristen 46), M Byhel, R Byhel, Rohrer.

*Aug 20 - Le Touquet, France*
**Algeria 1** (Bezzaz 7)
**United Arab Emirates 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Gauthier (Fra)

*Aug 20 - Manama*
**Bahrain 3** (Ismail 43, Isa 57, Abdurrahman 70)
**Burkina Faso 1** (Minoungou 64)
**HT:** 1-0

*Aug 20 - Minsk*
**Belarus 0**
**Argentina 0**
**Ref:** Suhina
**Belarus:** Zhevnov - Verkhovtsov, Omelyanchuk, Filipenko, A Hleb, Korytko, Kulchy, Putsila (Pavlov 80), Strahanovich (Molosh 80), Bulyga, Kutuzov.
**Argentina:** Carrizo - Zanetti, Burdisso, Coloccini, Heinze, P Ledesma (Cavenaghi 64), Cambiasso, Gutierrez, L Gonzalez, Tevez (Lopez 79), Denis (M Gonzalez 64).

*Aug 20 - Santa Cruz de la Sierra*
**Bolivia 1** (Cabrera 78)
**Panama 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Antequera (Bol)
**Bolivia:** Arias - Hoyos, Rivero, Mendez, Gutierrez (I Garcia 46), L Reyes, R Garcia (Saucedo 68), Torrico (Campos 68), Escobar (Robles 80), Pedriel (Botero 46), Martins (Cabrera 60).
**Panama:** Penedo - Rivera, M Torres (Rodriguez 46), R Torres, Blanco, Jimenez (Machado 75), Escobar, Soliz (Dios Perez 46), Baloy, G Torres, Tejada (Barahona 60). *Sent off: G Torres.*

*Aug 20 - Zenica*
**Bosnia-Herzegovina 1** (Ibricic 59)
**Bulgaria 2** (Berbatov 26, 57)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Stankovic (Ser)
**Bosnia-Herzegovina:** Brasnic - Berberovic, Spahic (Juric 60; Maletic 85), Bajic (Radeljic 60), Sabic (Krunic 8; Ibisevic 46), Damjanovic (Bozic 77), Muslimovic, Misimovic, Pjanic, Ibricic (Huseinovic 74), Nadarevic.
**Bulgaria:** Ivankov (Kolev 58) - Sirakov (Manolev 82), Tunchev (Iliev 39), Tomasic (Ivanov 59), Angelov, Dimitrov, Lazarov (Rangelov 58), M Petrov, S Petrov, Lucio Wagner, Berbatov.

*Aug 20 - East Rutherford, USA*
**Colombia 0**
**Ecuador 1** (Benitez pen 39)
**HT:** 0-1
**Colombia:** Julio - L Perea, A Mosquera, Velez, Portocarrero (Zuniga 46), Guarin (Chitiva 68), Amaya (Sanchez 46), Hernandez (Torres 58), Ramos (Vargas 46), Rodallega, D Moreno (T Moreno 46).
**Ecuador:** Cevallos (Elizaga 46) - Hurtado, G Espinoza (Castro 54), Mina, Castillo (Hidalgo 58), Urrutia (Cortez 18), J Guerron, Bolanos (De Jesus 83), W Ayovi, Benitez, F Caicedo (Palacios 78).

*Aug 20 - Copenhagen*
**Denmark 0**
**Spain 3** (Xabi Alonso 50, 90, Xavi 73)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 26,155. **Ref:** Hansson (Swe)
**Denmark:** T Sorensen - M Laursen, Agger, Jacobsen (Borring 71), Christian Poulsen, Silberbauer, D Jensen (Retov 79), Vingaard (Christopher Poulsen 56), Tomasson (Thygesen 56), Rommedahl, Bendtner.
**Spain:** Casillas (Reina 74) - Sergio Ramos (Iraola 74), Puyol, Albiol, Capdevila, Senna, Iniesta (Cazorla 63), Xavi, Silva (Diego Capel 46), Villa (Xabi Alonso 46), Fernando Torres (Guiza 63).

*Aug 20 - Dreux, France*
**DR Congo 2** (Makiadi 62, Lua Lua 68)
**Togo 1** (Adebayor pen 47)
**HT:** 0-0

*Aug 20 - Wembley*
**England 2** (Brown 45, J Cole 90)
**Czech Republic 2** (Baros 22, Jankulovski 48)
**HT:** 1-1. **Att:** 69,738. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
**England:** James - Brown, Ferdinand (Woodgate 57), Terry, A Cole, Beckham (Jenas 80), Lampard (Bentley 79), Barry, Gerrard (J Cole 57), Defoe (Heskey 46), Rooney (Downing 69).
**Czech Republic:** Cech - Grygera (Sverkos 46), Ujfalusi, Rozehnal, Jankulovski, Vlcek (Jarolim 46), Kovac (Rajnoch 76), Polak, Plasil (Papadopulos 90), Sirl (Kadlec 76), Baros (Pospech 46).

*Aug 20 - Tallinn*
**Estonia 2** (Purje 23, Oper 52)
**Malta 1** (Azzopardi 8)
**HT:** 1-1. **Ref:** Gilewski (Pol)
**Estonia:** Poom (Londak 46) - Jaager, Barengrub, Piiroja, Kruglov (Klavan 68), Dmitrijev, Vunk (Vassiljev 54), Oper, Zenjov (Kink 60), Lindpere (Konsa 80), Purje.
**Malta:** Haber - Scicluna (Schembri 46), Azzopardi (Wellman 78), Dimech, J Mifsud (Said 46), Sammut (R Bajada 81), G Agius (Frendo 78), Pace, Briffa, M Mifsud, Barbara (Woods 70).

*Aug 20 - Tampere*
**Finland 2** (Johansson 42, 88)
**Israel 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 4,929
**Finland:** Jaaskelainen (Maenpaa 46) - Kallio, Hyypia (Kuivasto 46), Tihinen, Vayrynen (Litmanen 73), R Eremenko, Forssell (Pohja 78), Kolkka, Lampi, Heikkinen, Johansson.
**Israel:** Awat - Kozokin, Ben Haim (Keinan 70), Strul, Ben Dayan, Baruchyan, Colautti, Barda, Benayoun (Golan 70), Alberman (Ohayon 64), Cohen.

*Aug 20 - Nuremberg*
**Germany 2** (Schweinsteiger pen 59, Marin 77)
**Belgium 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 34,117. **Ref:** Vejgaard (Den)
**Germany:** Enke - Fritz, Tasci, Westermann, Lahm (Jansen 81), Schweinsteiger, Rolfes, Hitzlsperger (Marin 70), Trochowski (Helmes 80), Podolski (Gomez 46), Klose (Kuranyi 46).
**Belgium:** Stijnen - Swerts (Hoefkens 87), Van Buyten, Simons, Daems, Witsel (Gillet 64), Mudingayi (De Man 87), Defour (Buffel 59), Goor, Sonck, De Sutter (Van Damme 46).

*Aug 20 - Chantilly, France*
**Guinea 1** (Ismail Bangoura 13)
**Ivory Coast 2** (B Kone 8, Sanogo 45)
**HT:** 1-2

*Aug 20 - Budapest*
**Hungary 3** (Priskin 29, Hajnal 55, pen 87)
**Montenegro 3** (Jovetic pen 45, 68, Vukcevic 51)
**HT:** 1-1. **Att:** 4,913. **Ref:** Havrilla (Slk)
**Hungary:** Babos - Szelesi (Bodnar 80), Vanczak, Juhasz (Timar 61), Low (Bodor 80), Toth (Vass 46), Vadocz, Huszti (Halmosi 69), Hajnal, Dzsudzsak, Priskin (Rudolf 69).
**Montenegro:** Poleksic - Verotic, Batak, Tanasijevic, V Bozovic, Boskovic, Vukcevic (Burzanovic 67), Pekovic, Drincic, Jovetic, Vucinic (Balovic 74).

*Aug 20 - Reykjavik*
**Iceland 1** (Steinsson 58)
**Azerbaijan 1** (Ramin 48)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 5,133. **Ref:** Evans (Wal)
**Iceland:** Magnusson - Steinsson, K O Sigurdsson, Hreidarsson, Eiriksson, B Saevarsson (Baldvinsson 76), Gislason, Palmason, J Gudmundsson (Hallfredsson 58), E Gudjohnsen, Thorvaldsson.
**Azerbaijan:** Veliyev - Malikov, Yunisoglu, Bakshiev (E Guliev 46), Abbasov, Sadigov, N Mammadov, E Mammadov (Shukurov 65), Ramin (Zeynalov 90), Huseynov, Subasic (Javadov 72).

*Aug 20 - Nice, France*
**Italy 2** (Gilardino 45, Ozcan og 67)
**Austria 2** (Pogatetz 14, Janko 39)
**HT:** 1-2. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Coue (Fra)
**Italy:** Buffon - Zambrotta (Cassetti 70), Bonera (Legrottaglie 46), Barzagli, Grosso (Dossena 46), De Rossi, Pirlo (Aquilani 46), Gattuso (Perrotta 45), Di Natale, Gilardino, Del Piero (Palombo 74).
**Austria:** Manninger (Ozcan 46) - Garics, Prodl, Stranzi, Pogatetz (Leitgeb 59), Scharner (Gercaliu 46), Harnik (Standfest 72), Saumel, Ivanschitz (Linz 86), Fuchs, Janko (Maierhofer 65).

*Aug 20 - Sapporo*
**Japan 1** (Eguren og 48)
**Uruguay 3** (Eguren 55, I Gonzalez 83, Abreu 90)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 31,133. **Ref:** Borski
**Japan:** Narazaki - Nakazawa, Takagi, Komano, Abe, Ono, K Nakamura (H Sato 75), Aoki (Nagatomo 46), Hasebe, Tamada (Oguro 68), Tatsuya Tanaka (Yamase 76).
**Uruguay:** Castillo - Fucile, Lugano, B Silva (Alcoba 88), Valdez, Eguren, Pereira (A Gonzalez 60), Perez (I Gonzalez 69), C Rodriguez (Sanchez 60), Bueno (Abreu 69), Suarez (J Rodriguez 84).

*Aug 20 - Tripoli*
**Libya 0**
**Senegal 0**

*Aug 20 - Marijampole*
**Lithuania 3** (Poskus 23, 54, Danilevicius 61)
**Moldova 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Kaasik (Est)
**Lithuania:** Karcemarskas - Klimavicius (Kucys 82), Skerla (Dedura 7), Zvirgzdauskas (Zalikas 46), Stankevicius, Semberas, Mikoliunas (Alunderis 75), Cesnauskis, Pilibaitis (Kalonas 46), Danilevicius, Poskus (Jankauskas 69).
**Moldova:** Namasco (Calancea 46) - Epureanu, Golovatenco, Corneencov (Armas 75), Rebeja, Tigirlas (Comlionoc 62), Zmeu, Suvorov (Andronic 53), Bordian, Frunza, Alexeev (Ovseannicov 64).

*Aug 20 - Luxembourg*
**Luxembourg 1** (Kitenge 73)
**Macedonia 4** (Pandev 6, 45, Grozdanovski 33, Naumoski 49)
**HT:** 0-3. **Att:** 885. **Ref:** Brugger (Aut)
**Luxembourg:** Joubert - Kintziger, Reiter, Hoffmann, Geisbusch (Sagramola 89), Peters, Strasser (Payal 46), Leweck (Da Mota 73), Bettmer (Gerson 46), Mutsch, Joachim (Kitenge 46).
**Macedonia:** Milosevski (Pacovski 46) - Sedloski, Mitreski, Noveski (Vajs 64), Lazarevski (Polozani 64), Popov (Petrov 46), Sumulikoski, Grozdanovski, Pandev, Maznov (Tasevski 46), Naumoski.

*Aug 20 - Rabat*
**Morocco 3** (Kharja 24, Safri pen 54, Zerka 78)
**Benin 1** (Omotoyossi 36)
**HT:** 1-1

*Aug 20 - Maputo*
**Mozambique 3** (Monteiro 4, 12, Domingues 35)
**Swaziland 0**
**HT:** 3-0

*Aug 20 - Oslo*
**Norway 1** (Reginiussen 61)
**Republic of Ireland 1** (Keane 44)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 16,037. **Ref:** Whitby (Wal)
**Norway:** Jarstein - Hogli, Reginiussen, Hangeland, Riise, Andresen, Winsnes, Stromstad (Haestad 43), Fredheim Holm (Gamst Pedersen 46), Abdellaoue (Grindheim 80), Helstad (Nevland 57).
**Rep Ireland:** Given (Kiely 46) - Finnan (Kelly 68), Dunne, O'Shea, Kilbane, Reid, McGeady (Hunt 68), Wheland, Duff, Keane, Doyle (Murphy 64).

*Aug 20 - Muscat*
**Oman 2** (Bashir 25, Suleiman 36)
**Uzbekistan 0**
**HT:** 2-0

*Aug 20 - Aveiro*
**Portugal 5** (Carlos Martins 24, Simao 49, Duda 86, Bruno Alves 88, Nani 90)
**Faroe Islands 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Shandor (Ukr)
**Portugal:** Quim - Bosingwa (Miguel 34), Ricardo Carvalho (Bruno Alves 55), Pepe, Antunes, Carlos Martins (Manuel Fernandes 55), Raul Meireles (Fernando Meira 78), Deco (Danny 55), Simao (Duda 70), Hugo Almeida, Nani.
**Faroe Islands:** Mikkelsen - R Jacobsen, Naes, a Bo, Danielsen, Olsen, Thomassen, Davidsen, Samuelsen, Jacobsen, Niclasen.

*Aug 20 - Doha*
**Qatar 5** (Afeef 5, Quintana 50, Hassan 63, Ali 88, Gholam 90)
**Tajikistan 0**
**HT:** 1-0

*Aug 20 - Urziceni*
**Romania 1** (Dica pen 52)
**Latvia 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
**Romania:** Lobont - Sapunaru, Tamas (Moti 63), Ghionea, Pulhac (Ogararu 46), Contra (Nicolita 46), Radoi (Costea 73), Paraschiv (Lazar 46), Cocis, Dica, Marica (Bratu 46).
**Latvia:** Vanins (Kolinko 46) - Klava, Stepanovs (Savcenkovs 74), Gorkss, Kacanovs (Zirnis 81), Pereplotkins, Astafjevs (Mezeckis 79), Laizans (Kolesnicenko 65), Solonicins, Verpakovskis (Butriks 74), Karlsons.

*Aug 20 - Moscow*
**Russia 1** (Zyryanov pen 78)
**Holland 1** (Van Persie 24)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
**Russia:** Akinfeev - Yanbayev, Ignashevich, Kolodin, Zhirkov, Bystrov (Torbinsky 63), Semak, Semshov, Zyryanov, Arshavin (Vorobev 87), Pavlyuchenko (Bazhenov 39).
**Holland:** Stekelenburg - Heitinga, Mathijsen, Ooijer, Van Bronckhorst, Van Persie (Afellay 72), De Jong, Van Bommel, Van der Vaart (Kuijt 59), Robben (De Zeeuw 84), Huntelaar (Vennegoor of Hesselink 59).

*Aug 20 - Nyon*
**Saudi Arabia 1** (Al-Sultan 70)
**Paraguay 1** (Riveros 9)
**HT:** 0-1
**Paraguay:** Villar - Bonet, J C Caceres, Da Silva, Morel, E Barreto, Vera, Riveros, Haedo Valdez (Santana 56), Cardozo (Cabanas 56), Santa Cruz.

*Aug 20 - Glasgow*
**Scotland 0**
**Northern Ireland 0**
**Att:** 28,072. **Ref:** Vollquartz (Den)
**Scotland:** Gordon (McGregor 46) - Alexander, McManus (Barr 46), Weir (Berra 72), Naysmith, Brown, Thomson (Robson 46), Fletcher (Stewart 69), Morrison (Commons 62), Miller, McFadden.
**Northern Ireland:** Taylor - McAuley (Duff 76), Evans, Craigan, McGivern, Baird, Clingan (O'Connor 58), Davis, Brunt (Feeney 55), Healy, Paterson (Shiels 46). *Sent off: McGivern 57min.*

*Aug 20 - Bratislava*
**Slovakia 0**
**Greece 2** (Gekas 61, 82)
**HT:** 0-0
**Slovakia:** Senecky - Zabavnik, Skrtel, Durica, Cech, Hamsik (Svento 79), Karhan, Kozak (Mintal 66), Vittek, Sapara (Sestak 59), Holosko (Sebo 54).
**Greece:** Chalkias - Seitaridis (Spyropoulos 46), Torosidis, Dellas, Papastathopoulos (Kyrgiakos 46), Katsouranis, Basinas (Patsatzoglou 80), Karagounis (Vyntra 68), Salpigidis (Limberopoulos 73), Amanatidis (Gekas 46), Haristeas.

*Aug 20 - Maribor*
**Slovenia 2** (Suler 4, Sisic pen 55)
**Croatia 3** (Rakitic 37, 64, Srna pen 59)
**HT:** 1-1. **Att:** 11,500. **Ref:** Circhetta (Swi)
**Slovenia:** S Handanovic - Ilic (Dedic 84), Morec (Cesar 51), Suler, Jokic, Brecko, Zlogar, Komac (Matic 73), Kirm (Birsa 62), Sisic (Burgic 75), Novakovic.
**Croatia:** Pletikosa (Runje 46) - Corluka, Simic (Krizanic 46), R Kovac, Pranjic, Srna (Pokrivac 82), J Leko, Kranjcar (Vukojevic 19), Rakitic, Petric (Klasnic 46), Olic (Vejic 84).

*Aug 20 - Omdurman*
**Sudan 4** (Fathallah og 35, El-Tahir 81, 90, Adil 88)
**Egypt 0**
**HT:** 1-0
**Egypt:** El Hadary (Monsef) - A Hassan (Gomaa), Fathallah, H Said, Moawwad, Aboutraika (Al-Muhammadi), Abd Rabou (Abdel Malek), Shawki, Hossam (Fadl), Moteab (Ashour), Zaki.

*Aug 20 - Gothenburg*
**Sweden 2** (H Larsson 5, Kallstrom pen 84)
**France 3** (Benzema 19, Govou 61, 77)
**HT:** 1-1. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)
**Sweden:** Isaksson - Mellberg (Von Schlebrugge 70), Majstorovic, P Hansson, M Nilsson (Stoor 62), D Andersson (Holmen 83), Kallstrom, A Svensson, Wilhelmsson (Wendt 46), H Larsson (Berg 62), Rosenberg.
**France:** Mandanda - Sagna, Mexes, Gallas, Evra, Govou, Toulalan (Gourcuff 90), L Diarra, Malouda (A Diarra 70), Benzema, Henry.

*Aug 20 - Geneva*
**Switzerland 4** (Stocker 8, Yakin 27, Nef 72, Vonlanthen 81)
**Cyprus 1** (Makrides 34)
**HT:** 2-1. **Att:** 14,500. **Ref:** Ceferin (Sln)
**Switzerland:** Jakupovic - Nef, Djourou, Grichting, Magnin (Spycher 35), Stocker (Vonlanthen 75), Huggel (Burki 85), Inler (Fernandes 62), Behrami, Yakin (Abdi 62), Nkufo (Derdiyok 62).
**Cyprus:** Georgillades (Morphis 53) - Nicolaou, Christou, Charalambous, Garpozis, Michael (Okkarides 53), Christofi (Alekou 72), Makrides, Charalambi (Maragkos 75), Aloneftis (Pavlou 67), Constantinou (Okkas 50).

*Aug 20 - Arusha*
**Tanzania 1** (Joseph 34)
**Ghana 1** (Kingston 83)
**HT:** 1-0

*Aug 20 - Monastir*
**Tunisia 1** (Chermiti 37)
**Angola 1** (Santana 90)
**HT:** 1-0

*Aug 20 - Izmit*
**Turkey 1** (Halil Altintop 74)
**Chile 0**
**HT:** 0-0
**Turkey:** Volkan - Gokhan Gonul, Gokhan Zan, Servet, Ugur (Ibrahim 65), Kazim (Serdar 63), Selcuk (Gokhan Unal 46), Mehmet Aurelio, Ayhan (Nuri 59), Tuncay (Mehmet Topal 80), Semih (Halil Altintop 46).
**Chile:** Bravo - Carmona (Beausejour 77), Contreras, Jara, Cereceda, Sanchez, Vidal, Fernandez (Valdivia 46), Estrada, Gonzalez (Fierro 77), Suazo.

*Aug 20 - Lviv*
**Ukraine 1** (Kravchenko 44)
**Poland 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Nalbandian (Arm)
**Ukraine:** Pyatov - Yarmash, Mykalyk, Chygrynskyi, Shevchuk, Tymoshchuk (Levchenko 66), Holaydo (Mandzyuk 90), Nazarenko (Hai 72), Kravchenko (Kalinichenko 63), Voronin (Shevchenko 46), Milevskyi (Homeniuk 58).
**Poland:** Fabianski - Dudka, Zewlakow, Kokoszka (Polczak 46), Golanski (Kowalczyk 10), Lewandowski, Murawski (Guerreiro 46), Krzynowek, Blaszczykowski (Majewski 56), Smolarek (Zahorski 46), Jelen (Pawlowski 76).

*Aug 20 - Puerto La Cruz*
**Venezuela 4** (Vielma 13, Maldonado 51, Rojas pen 54, Moreno 60)
**Syria 1** (Alagha 80)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Gomez (Ven)
**Venezuela:** Morales (Romo 83) - Chacon (Mirabal 65), Boada, Rey, J Hernandez, Vielma (Flores 62), M Mea Vitali (Acosta 69), Rojas (Seijas 55), Guerra (Ramirez 79), Moreno, Maldonado (Del Valle 75).

*Aug 20 - Swansea*
**Wales 1** (Koumas 16)
**Georgia 2** (Kenia 66, Gotsiridze 90)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 6,435. **Ref:** Jug (Sln)
**Wales:** Myhill - Eardley, Ricketts, Robinson, Morgan, Williams, Fletcher, Davies, Parry (Vaughan 70), Koumas, Eastwood (Earnshaw 80).
**Georgia:** Loria - Lobjanidze, Khizanishvili, Asatiani, Kvakhadze, Menteshashvili, Mujiri (Khmaladze 46), Kenia (Kiimiashvili 76), Odikadze (Devdariani 86), A Iashvili (Gotsiridze 81), Mchedlidze (Aleksidze 23).

*Aug 20 - Harare*
**Zimbabwe 1** (Sadomba 30)
**Botswana 0**
**HT:** 1-0

# CLUB FOOTBALL EUROPE

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

### 2nd qualifying round
*1st legs - July 29/30; 2nd legs - August 5/6*
AaB (Den) v Modrica (Bos)
5-0, 2-1 (agg 7-1)
Anderlecht (Blg) v BATE Borisov (Bls)
1-2, 2-2 (agg 3-4)
Anorthosis (Cyp) v Rapid Wien (Aut)
3-0, 1-3 (agg 4-3)
Beitar Jerusalem (Isr) v Wisla Krakow (Pol)
2-1, 0-5 (agg 2-6)
Brann (Nor) v Ventspils (Lat)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2; Brann on away goals)
Domzale (Sln) v Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)
0-3, 2-3 (agg 2-6)
Drogheda (Ire) v Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr)
1-2, 2-2 (agg 3-4)
Fenerbahce (Tur) v MTK (Hun)
2-0, 5-0 (agg 7-0)
IFK Gothenburg (Swe) v Basle (Swi)
1-1, 2-4 (agg 3-5)
Inter Baku (Aze) v Partizan Belgrade (Ser)
1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Panathinaikos (Gre) v Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo)
3-0, 0-0 (agg 3-0)
Rangers (Sco) v FBK Kaunas (Lit)
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
Sheriff (Mol) v Sparta Prague (Cze)
0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Tampere United (Fin) v Artmedia Petrzalka (Slk)
1-3, 2-4 (agg 3-7)

## UEFA CUP

### 1st qualifying round
*1st legs - July 17; 2nd legs - July 31*
Ararat Yerevan (Arm) v Bellinzona (Swi)
0-1, 1-3 (agg 1-4)
Bangor (Wal) v Midtjylland (Den)
1-6, 0-4 (agg 1-10)
Brondby (Den) v B36 (Far)
1-0, 2-0 (agg 3-0)
Cherno More (Bul) v Sant Julia (And)
4-0, 5-0 (agg 9-0)
Cliftonville (NI) v FC Copenhagen (Den)
0-4, 0-7 (agg 0-11)
Cork City (Ire) v Haka (Fin)
2-2, 0-4 (agg 2-6)
Dacia (Mol) v Borac (Ser)
1-1, 1-3 (agg 2-4)
Djurgardens (Swe) v Flora Tallinn (Est)
0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2; Djurgardens on away goals)
EB/Streymur (Far) v Manchester City (Eng)
0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
FH (Ice) v Grevenmacher (Lux)
3-2, 5-1 (agg 8-3)
Glentoran (NI) v Metalurgs Liepaja (Lat)
1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Gyor (Hun) v Zestafoni (Geo)
1-1, 2-1 (agg 3-2)
Hajduk Split (Cro) v Birkirkara (Mlt)
4-0, 3-0 (agg 7-0)
Hapoel Kiryat Shmona (Isr) v Mogren (Mne)
1-1, 3-0 (agg 4-1)
Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) v Juvenes/Dogana (SaM)
3-0, 2-0 (agg 5-0)
Hertha Berlin (Ger) v Nistru (Mol)
8-1, 0-0 (agg 8-1)
Honka (Fin) v IA (Ice)
3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2)
Khazar (Aze) v Lech Poznan (Pol)
0-1, 1-4 (agg 1-5)
Koper (Sln) v Vllaznia (Alb)
1-2, 0-0 (agg 1-2)
Legia Warsaw (Pol) v Gomel (Bls)
0-0, 4-1 (agg 4-1)
Marsaxlokk (Mlt) v Slaven (Cro)
0-4, 0-4 (agg 0-8)
MTZ-RIPO (Bls) v Zilina (Slk)
2-2, 0-1 (agg 2-3)
Olimps (Lat) v St Patrick's (Ire)
0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Omonia (Cyp) v Milano (Mac)
2-0, 2-1 (agg 4-1)
Pelister (Mac) v APOEL (Cyp)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Salzburg (Aut) v Banants (Arm)
7-0, 3-0 (agg 10-0)
Shakhtyor (Kaz) v Debrecen (Hun)
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Siroki Brijeg (Bos) v Partizani (Alb)
0-0, 3-1 (agg 3-1)
Spartak Trnava (Slk) v WIT Georgia (Geo)
2-2, 0-1 (agg 2-3)
Suduva (Lit) v The New Saints (Wal)
1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Tobol (Kaz) v Austria Wien (Aut)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
TVMK (Est) v Nordsjaelland (Den)
0-3, 0-5 (agg 0-8)
Union Luxembourg (Lux) v Kalmar (Swe)
0-3, 1-7 (agg 1-10)
Vaduz (Lie) v Zrinjski (Bos)
1-2, 0-3 (agg 1-5)
Vetra (Lit) v Viking (Nor)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Vojvodina (Ser) v Olimpik (Aze)
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
Zeta (Mne) v Interblock (Sln)
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)





## INTERTOTO CUP

### 3rd round
*1st legs - July 19/20; 2nd legs - July 26/27*
Bnei Sakhnin (Isr) v Deportivo La Coruna (Spa)
1-2, 0-1 (agg 1-3)
Elfsborg (Swe) v FK Riga (Lat)
1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
Grasshopper (Swi) v Chernomorets Burgas (Bul)
3-0, 1-0 (agg 4-0)
NAC Breda (Hol) v Rosenborg (Nor)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Neftchi (Aze) v Vaslui (Rom)
2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3)
OB (Den) v Aston Villa (Eng)
2-2, 0-1 (agg 2-3)
Panionios (Gre) v Napoli (Ita)
0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2)
Rennes (Fra) v Tavriya (Ukr)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1; Rennes 10-9 on pens)
Saturn (Rus) v Stuttgart (Ger)
1-0, 0-3 (aet) (agg 1-3)
Sivasspor (Tur) v Sporting Braga (Por)
0-2, 0-3 (agg 0-5)
Sturm Graz (Aut) v Honved (Hun)
0-0, 2-1 (agg 2-1)

*Winners enter UEFA Cup at 2nd qualifying round stage*

## AUSTRIA

**July 25:** LASK Linz 3 Austria Karnten 2.
**July 26:** Mattersburg 0 Rapid Wien 1; Austria Wien 3 Ried 1.
**July 27:** Kapfenberg 1 Salzburg 1.
**July 29:** Altach 1 Sturm Graz 0.
**Aug 1:** Mattersburg 3 Altach 1.
**Aug 2:** Rapid Wien 3 Kapfenberg 1.
**Aug 3:** Sturm Graz 0 Austria Wien 0; Salzburg 1 LASK Linz 0; Ried 0 Austria Karnten 0.
**Aug 6:** Austria Karnten 0 Sturm Graz 2.
**Aug 8:** LASK Linz 2 Ried 1.
**Aug 9:** Austria Karnten 2 Mattersburg 0; Kapfenberg 1 Sturm Graz 3; Altach 2 Rapid Wien 7.
**Aug 10:** Austria Wien 3 Salzburg 2.

**AUSTRIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sturm Graz | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 3 | 13 |
| Rapid Wien | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 8 | 13 |
| Austria Wien | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 6 | 12 |
| LASK Linz | 6 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 12 |
| Salzburg | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 15 | 6 | 11 |
| Ried | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| Mattersburg | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 14 | 6 |
| A Karnten | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 5 |
| Altach | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 19 | 3 |
| Kapfenberg | 6 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 12 | 2 |

## BELGIUM

**Saturday, August 16**
**Cercle Brugge 0**
**Anderlecht 3** (Van Damme 15, Legear 59, Chatelle 86) Att: 19,000

**Dender 1** (Jacobs 47)
**Standard 3** (Mbokani 4, 57, Toama 60) Att: 5,600

**Roeselare 2** (Thompson 42, Dissa 46)
**Kortrijk 2** (Hietanen og 10, De Ly 70) Att: 6,000

**Tubize 1** (Rafael 85)
**Mouscron 2** (Okwunwanne 12, Vandooren 73) Att: 4,000

**Westerlo 1** (Dekelver 17)
**Charleroi 0** Att: 5,000

**Zulte Waregem 0**
**Lokeren 0** Att: 6,000

**Sunday, August 17**
**Genk 1** (Barda 18)
**Germinal Beerschot 1** (P Monteyne 74) Att: 20,709

**Gent 5** (Suler 13, Azofeifa 21, 52, Olufade 29, Ljubijankic 59)
**Mons 0** Att: 10,000

**BELGIUM**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gent | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 3 |
| Anderlecht | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Standard | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Mouscron | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Westerlo | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Kortrijk | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Roeselare | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Genk | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Germinal | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Lokeren | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Z Waregem | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Club Brugge | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mechelen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tubize | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Charleroi | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Dender | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Cercle Brugge | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Mons | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
2 Randall Azofeifa (Gent)
2 Dieumerci Mbokani (Standard)

### SUPER CUP
*Aug 9 - Liege*
**Standard 3** (Onyewu 13, 18, Nicaise 87)
**Anderlecht 1** (Suarez pen 73)
**HT:** 2-0

## BULGARIA

**Aug 9:** Pirin 1 Cherno More 2; Spartak Varna 2 Lokomotiv Mezdra 0; Sliven 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Slavia 0 Lovech 3; Vihren 1 Levski 0; Minyor 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 1.
**Aug 10:** Botev 0 Chernomorets 1; CSKA 1 Belasitsa 0.
**Aug 15:** Sliven 3 CSKA 1.
**Aug 16:** Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1 Chernomorets 1; Belasitsa 0 Spartak Varna 0; Lokomotiv Mezdra 1 Slavia 0.
**Aug 17:** Levski 6 Botev 0; Lokomotiv Sofia 1 Pirin 0; Cherno More 2 Vihren 0; Lovech 2 Minyor 0.

**BULGARIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lovech | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| Cherno More | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| Lok Sofia | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| Sliven | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Spartak Varna | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Chernomorets | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Levski | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| CSKA | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Lok Mezdra | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Vihren | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Lok Plovdiv | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Belasitsa | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Pirin | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Minyor | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Slavia | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Botev | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 0 |

## CROATIA

**July 27:** Inter 2 Sibenik 3; Varteks 2 Zagreb 1; Hajduk 1 Zadar 0; Sesvete 1 Osijek 1; Cibalia 0 Slaven 0; Dinamo 2 Rijeka 0.
**Aug 3:** Rijeka 0 Zagreb 1; Osijek 2 Cibalia 0; Sibenik 0 Sesvete 1; Slaven 2 Zadar 1; Dinamo 3 Inter 1; Hajduk 1 Varteks 1.
**Aug 9:** Sesvete 0 Dinamo 1.
**Aug 10:** Inter 2 Rijeka 2; Zadar 2 Osijek 2; Varteks 2 Slaven 3; Cibalia 2 Sibenik 0; Zagreb 3 Hajduk 0.
**Aug 17:** Rijeka 3 Hajduk 1; Sibenik 1 Zadar 0; Slaven 2 Zagreb 0; Dinamo 6 Cibalia 0; Osijek 2 Varteks 1; Inter 3 Sesvete 2.

**CROATIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dinamo | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 1 | 12 |
| Slaven | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 10 |
| Osijek | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 8 |
| Zagreb | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| Sibenik | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Varteks | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 4 |
| Rijeka | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| Sesvete | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Inter | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 4 |
| Hajduk | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| Cibalia | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 4 |
| Zadar | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 1 |

## CZECH REPUBLIC

**Aug 2:** Ostrava 1 Kladno 0; Sparta 1 Mlada Boleslav 0; Plzen 3 Zizkov 2; Zlin 0 Jablonec 1.
**Aug 3:** Teplice 4 Ceske Budejovice 0; Liberec 2 Slavia 1; Pribram 0 Brno 1.
**Aug 4:** Bohemians 1 Olomouc 2.
**Aug 6:** Slavia 1 Pribram 0.
**Aug 10:** Brno 4 Liberec 1; Ceske Budejovice 0 Bohemians 0; Olomouc 2 Plzen 1; Kladno 0 Sparta 2; Zizkov 3 Teplice 0; Mlada Boleslav 1 Zlin 0.
**Aug 11:** Jablonec 2 Ostrava 1.
**Aug 16:** Ostrava 0 Brno 0; Zlin 1 Zizkov 0; Plzen 1 Slavia 1.
**Aug 17:** Sparta 1 Olomouc 1; Jablonec 1 Mlada Boleslav 1; Bohemians 3 Kladno 1; Pribram 3 Ceske Budejovice 0.
**Aug 18:** Liberec 1 Teplice 0.

**CZECH REPUBLIC**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brno | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Sparta | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 7 |
| Olomouc | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 7 |
| Jablonec | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Liberec | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Bohemians | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Plzen | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| Slavia | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| M Boleslav | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Ostrava | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Zizkov | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| Pribram | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Teplice | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Zlin | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| C Budejovice | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 1 |
| Kladno | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 0 |

## DENMARK

**July 26:** Brondby 2 AaB 1.
**July 27:** Esbjerg 0 Vejle 1; SonderjyskE 1 Midtjylland 1; Randers 1 Copenhagen 1.
**July 28:** AGF 3 Horsens 1.
**Aug 2:** Vejle 2 AaB 3.
**Aug 3:** Midtjylland 2 Horsens 1; Esbjerg 1 Nordsjaelland 1; OB 3 AGF 1; Brondby 0 Randers 3.
**Aug 4:** SonderjyskE 1 Copenhagen 1.
**Aug 6:** OB 3 Nordsjaelland 1.
**Aug 9:** AaB 1 Esbjerg 1; Horsens 0 Brondby 1.
**Aug 10:** Nordsjaelland 1 Randers 1; Midtjylland 4 OB 0; Copenhagen 1 AGF 0.
**Aug 11:** Vejle 2 SonderjyskE 1.
**Aug 16:** Randers 1 Esbjerg 1.
**Aug 17:** AaB 0 OB 3; Horsens 0 Vejle 0; Copenhagen 3 Midtjylland 1; AGF 2 Brondby 1; Nordsjaelland 0 SonderjyskE 1.

**DENMARK**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OB | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 7 | 12 |
| Copenhagen | 5 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 11 |
| Midtjylland | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 6 | 10 |
| Randers | 5 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 9 | 4 | 9 |
| Brondby | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 9 |
| Vejle | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| AGF | 5 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 6 |
| SonderjyskE | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Horsens | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| AaB | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 4 |
| Esbjerg | 5 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Nordsjaelland | 5 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 2 |

## ENGLAND

**Saturday, August 16**
**Arsenal 1** (Nasri 4)
**West Bromwich 0** Att: 60,071

**Bolton 3** (Steinsson 34, Davies 41, Elmander 45)
**Stoke 1** (Fuller 90) Att: 22,717

**Everton 2** (Arteta 45, Aiyegbeni 64)
**Blackburn 3** (Dunn 22, Santa Cruz 66, Ooijer 90) Att: 38,675

**Hull 2** (Geovanni 22, Folan 81)
**Fulham 1** (Seol 8) Att: 24,525

**Middlesbrough 2** (Wheater 71, Hossam 86)
**Tottenham 1** (Huth og 90) Att: 32,623

**Sunderland 0**
**Liverpool 1** (Fernando Torres 83) Att: 43,259

**West Ham 2** (Ashton 3, 10)
**Wigan 1** (Zaki 47) Att: 32,758

**Sunday, August 17**
**Aston Villa 4** (Carew 47, Agbonlahor 69, 74, 76)
**Manchester City 2** (Elano pen 64, Corluka 90) Att: 39,955

**Chelsea 4** (J Cole 12, Anelka 26, Lampard pen 45, Deco 89)
**Portsmouth 0** Att: 41,468

**Manchester United 1** (Fletcher 24)
**Newcastle 1** (Martins 22) Att: 75,512

**ENGLAND**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chelsea | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3 |
| Aston Villa | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Bolton | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Blackburn | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Hull | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Middlesbrough | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| West Ham | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Arsenal | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Liverpool | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Man Utd | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Newcastle | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Everton | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Fulham | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Tottenham | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Wigan | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Sunderland | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| West Brom | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Man City | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 0 |
| Stoke | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Portsmouth | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
3 Gabriel Agbonlahor (Aston Villa)
2 Dean Ashton (West Ham)

### COMMUNITY SHIELD
*Aug 10 - Wembley*
**Manchester United 0**
**Portsmouth 0**
**Att:** 84,808. **Ref:** Walton
*Man Utd 3-1 on pens*

## FRANCE

**Saturday, August 9**
**Auxerre 2** (Jelen 36, Quercia 72)
**Nantes 1** (De

Back in the mix...Bayern Munich's Lukas Podolski is outnumbered against Hamburg during the opening match of the league season in Germany

**Saint-Etienne 2** (Matsui 11, Feindouno pen 18)
**Sochaux 1** (Perquis 74) Att: 30,895

**Toulouse 2** (Congre 62, Gignac 88)
**Le Havre 1** (Alassane 10) Att: 14,809

**Sunday, August 17**

**Grenoble 1** (Akrour 20)
**Rennes 0** Att: 17,528

**Lorient 0**
**Lyon 0** Att: 14,617

**Marseille 4** (Niang 17, Grichting og 63, Grandin 77, Zenden 86)
**Auxerre 0** Att: 55,776

| FRANCE | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grenoble | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| Marseille | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| Lyon | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Monaco | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Lorient | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Caen | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Le Mans | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Bordeaux | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Le Havre | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Nice | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Saint-Etienne | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| PSG | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Valenciennes | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Toulouse | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Auxerre | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Rennes | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| Nantes | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Nancy | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Lille | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Sochaux | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
2 Nassim Akrour (Grenoble)
2 Karim Benzema (Lyon)
2 Elliot Grandin (Marseille)
2 Modibo Maiga (Le Mans)
2 Mamadou Niang (Marseille)
2 Olivier Thomert (Rennes)

## SUPER CUP

*Aug 2 - Bordeaux*
**Lyon 0**
**Bordeaux 0**
**Att:** 27,167. **Ref:** Layac
*Bordeaux 5-4 on pens*

## GERMANY

**Friday, August 15**

**Bayern Munich 2** (Schweinsteiger 12, Podolski pen 16)
**Hamburg 2** (Guerrero 25, Trochowski pen 57) Att: 69,000

**Saturday, August 16**

**Arminia Bielefeld 2** (Wichniarek 74, 81)
**Werder Bremen 2** (Rosenberg 60, 80) Att: 24,700

**Bayer Leverkusen 2** (Helmes 21, Kiessling 83)
**Borussia Dortmund 3** (Haedo Valdez 4, Kringe 37, Subotic 49) Att: 21,500

**Energie Cottbus 0**
**1899 Hoffenheim 3** (Ibisevic 16, 76, Ba 54) Att: 18,370

**Karlsruhe 1** (Eichner 30)
**Bochum 0** Att: 24,800

**Schalke 3** (Bordon 2, Kuranyi 7, 64)
**Hannover 0** Att: 61,673

**Wolfsburg 2** (Gentner 48, Misimovic 78)
**Koln 1** (Novakovic 20) Att: 29,085

**Sunday, August 17**

**Eintracht Frankfurt 0**
**Hertha Berlin 2** (Raffael 44, Ebert 60) Att: 44,000

**Monchengladbach 1** (Friend 60)
**Stuttgart 3** (Hitzlsperger 15, Marica 26, Gomez 44) Att: 47,028

| GERMANY | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hoffenheim | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Schalke | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Stuttgart | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Hertha Berlin | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| B Dortmund | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Wolfsburg | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Karlsruhe | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| A Bielefeld | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Bayern | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Hamburg | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Werder | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| B Leverkusen | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Koln | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Bochum | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| M'gladbach | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| E Frankfurt | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| E Cottbus | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Hannover | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
2 Vedad Ibisevic (1899 Hoffenheim)
2 Kevin Kuranyi (Schalke)
2 Markus Rosenberg (Werder Bremen)
2 Artur Wichniarek (Arminia Bielefeld)

## HUNGARY

**July 25:** Kaposvar 3 MTK 1.
**July 26:** Debrecen 2 Zalaegerszeg 1; Siofok 1 Fehervar 0; Szombathely 2 Gyor 1; Rakospalota 1 Diosgyor 1; Ujpest 1 Nyiregyhaza 0.
**July 28:** Kecskemet 1 Paks 2.
**July 29:** Honved 0 Vasas 1.
**Aug 1:** Vasas 4 Ujpest 2.
**Aug 2:** Paks 1 Rakospalota 3; Fehervar 1 Szombathely 0; Zalaegerszeg 1 Kecskemet 0; Nyiregyhaza 1 Siofok 0; Diosgyor 1 Kaposvar 0.
**Aug 3:** MTK 1 Honved 1.
**Aug 4:** Gyor 0 Debrecen 3.
**Aug 8:** Honved 3 Diosgyor 1.
**Aug 9:** Szombathely 3 Nyiregyhaza 0; Rakospalota 2 Zalaegerszeg 3; Vasas 0 MTK 4; Kaposvar 3 Paks 5; Siofok 0 Ujpest 1.
**Aug 10:** Debrecen 1 Fehervar 0.
**Aug 15:** Ujpest 1 Szombathely 0.
**Aug 16:** Paks 1 Honved 1; Fehervar 1 Kecskemet 2; Siofok 0 Vasas 1; Zalaegerszeg 1 Kaposvar 1; Diosgyor 2 MTK 3.
**Aug 17:** Nyiregyhaza 1 Debrecen 1; Gyor 4 Rakospalota 2.

| HUNGARY | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Debrecen | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 10 |
| Ujpest | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Vasas | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 9 |
| MTK | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 7 |
| Paks | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 7 |
| Zalaegerszeg | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Szombathely | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 6 |
| Honved | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Rakospalota | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 4 |
| Kaposvar | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 4 |
| Diosgyor | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| Nyiregyhaza | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| Kecskemet | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Gyor | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| Fehervar | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Siofok | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 |





## NORWAY

**July 26:** Fredrikstad 1 Brann 0.
**July 27:** Ham-Kam 1 Lillestrom 2; Stromsgodset 4 Molde 0; Bodo/Glimt 2 Lyn 1; Aalesund 1 Viking 2.
**July 28:** Valerenga 0 Tromso 0.
**Aug 2:** Valerenga 1 Fredrikstad 1; Brann 4 Ham-Kam 1.
**Aug 3:** Tromso 4 Rosenborg 0; Lillestrom 3 Stromsgodset 1; Stabaek 4 Bodo/Glimt 1; Viking 2 Lyn 0.
**Aug 4:** Molde 0 Aalesund 0.
**Aug 6:** Ham-Kam 0 Tromso 1; Rosenborg 1 Stabaek 2.
**Aug 9:** Stromsgodset 2 Brann 0.
**Aug 10:** Aalesund 1 Stabaek 2; Lyn 1 Lillestrom 0; Bodo/Glimt 3 Viking 2; Ham-Kam 1 Valerenga 1; Rosenborg 3 Molde 1.
**Aug 11:** Fredrikstad 2 Tromso 0.

| NORWAY | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stabaek | 17 | 11 | 4 | 2 | 34 | 14 | 37 |
| Fredrikstad | 17 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 28 | 19 | 33 |
| Tromso | 17 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 22 | 11 | 31 |
| Lyn | 17 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 23 | 19 | 27 |
| Bodo/Glimt | 17 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 21 | 27 | 25 |
| Rosenborg | 17 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 25 | 22 | 24 |
| Viking | 17 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 22 | 22 | 24 |
| Brann | 17 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 26 | 25 | 23 |
| Valerenga | 17 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 21 | 21 | 23 |
| Stromsgodset | 17 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 22 | 23 | 22 |
| Molde | 17 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 22 | 24 | 19 |
| Lillestrom | 17 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 20 | 27 | 18 |
| Aalesund | 17 | 4 | 2 | 11 | 22 | 34 | 14 |
| Ham-Kam | 17 | 2 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 32 | 10 |

## POLAND

**Aug 8:** Legia 2 Polonia Warsaw 2; Lech 2 Belchatow 3.
**Aug 9:** Slask 1 Lechia 1; Wisla 1 Polonia Bytom 0; LKS 0 Odra 0; Piast 2 Cracovia 0.
**Aug 10:** Gornik 0 Ruch 0; Arka 1 Jagiellonia 1.
**Aug 15:** Arka 1 Gornik 0; Cracovia 2 LKS 0.
**Aug 16:** Polonia Bytom 1 Slask 1; Polonia Warsaw 0 Wisla 2; Ruch 2 Lechia 1; Belchatow 0 Piast 0.
**Aug 17:** Jagiellonia 0 Lech 3; Odra 2 Legia 0.

| POLAND | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wisla | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 6 |
| Odra | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Piast | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Belchatow | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Arka | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Ruch | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Lech | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Cracovia | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Slask | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Lechia | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Polonia B | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Gornik | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Legia | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Polonia W | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| LKS | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Jagiellonia | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 |

## PORTUGAL

## SUPER CUP

*Aug 16 - Faro*
**Porto 0**
**Sporting Lisbon 2** (Djalo 45, 58)
**HT:** 0-1

## ROMANIA

**July 26:** Brasov 1 Urziceni 0; Univ Craiova 2 Poli Iasi 0; Arges 1 Poli Timisoara 1; Gloria Buzau 0 Farul 1; Rapid 3 Gloria Bistrita 0.
**July 27:** Gaz Metan 2 Otelul 2; Otopeni 0 CFR 4; Pandurii 1 Dinamo 1.
**July 30:** Vaslui 1 Steaua 0.
**Aug 1:** Gloria Bistrita 2 Univ Craiova 0.
**Aug 2:** Otelul 3 Otopeni 1; Urziceni 3 Arges 2; Farul 0 Rapid 2; Poli Timisoara 3 Pandurii 0.
**Aug 3:** Dinamo 1 Gaz Metan 0; Poli Iasi 1 Vaslui 3; Steaua 2 Brasov 1; CFR 2 Gloria Buzau 0.
**Aug 8:** Poli Iasi 0 Steaua 2; Vaslui 1 Gloria Bistrita 0.
**Aug 9:** Rapid 1 CFR 0; Gaz Metan 5 Poli Timisoara 1; Gloria Buzau 0 Otelul 2; Univ Craiova 3 Farul 2.
**Aug 10:** Otopeni 2 Dinamo 3; Pandurii 1 Urziceni 5; Arges 1 Brasov 0.
**Aug 15:** Urziceni 4 Gaz Metan 0; Gloria Bistrita 3 Poli Iasi 1.
**Aug 16:** Poli Timisoara 3 Otopeni 1; Brasov 2 Pandurii 1; Steaua 2 Arges 0; Dinamo 4 Gloria Buzau 1.
**Aug 17:** Otelul 2 Rapid 1; Farul 1 Vaslui 0; CFR 1 Univ Craiova 1.

| ROMANIA | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dinamo | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 4 | 10 |
| Otelul | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 4 | 10 |
| Urziceni | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 4 | 9 |
| Rapid | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| Steaua | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 9 |
| Vaslui | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 9 |
| CFR | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 7 |
| Poli Timisoara | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| Univ Craiova | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Gloria Bistrita | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Brasov | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| Farul | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Gaz Metan | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 4 |
| Arges | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| Pandurii | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 11 | 1 |
| Poli Iasi | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 0 |
| Gloria Buzau | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 0 |
| Otopeni | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 13 | 0 |

## RUSSIA

**July 25:** Khimki 2 Spartak Nalchik 0.
**July 26:** Rubin 0 CSKA 0; Dynamo 1 Zenit 0; Amkar 0 Tom 0.
**July 27:** FC Moscow 0 Lokomotiv 3; Spartak Moscow 3 Luch-Energiya 0; Shinnik 1 Terek 1.
**July 30:** Krylia Sovetov 4 Saturn 0; CSKA 0 Zenit 0.
**Aug 2:** Tom 0 Spartak Moscow 1; Zenit 2 FC Moscow 1; Khimki 1 Dynamo 1.
**Aug 3:** Luch-Energiya 1 Rubin 1; Amkar 0 Spartak Nalchik 0; Terek 1 Saturn 0; CSKA 0 Krylia Sovetov 0.
**Aug 9:** Shinnik 1 Luch-Energiya 2; FC Moscow 2 Tom 1; Krylia Sovetov 2 Lokomotiv 0; Spartak Moscow 1 Khimki 1.
**Aug 10:** Rubin 4 Zenit 1; Spartak Nalchik 2 Terek 0; Dynamo 1 Amkar 0; Saturn 0 CSKA 4.
**Aug 13:** Zenit 3 Terek 1.
**Aug 15:** Tom 1 Rubin 2.
**Aug 16:** Dynamo 1 Spartak Nalchik 0; Luch-Energiya 0 Krylia Sovetov 0; Lokomotiv 0 Saturn 0.
**Aug 17:** Khimki 0 FC Moscow 2; Zenit 1 Shinnik 3; Amkar 1 Spartak Moscow 1; CSKA 2 Terek 0.

| RUSSIA | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rubin | 18 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 26 | 14 | 36 |
| Dynamo | 18 | 10 | 4 | 4 | 25 | 18 | 34 |
| Amkar | 18 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 19 | 13 | 29 |
| Spartak M | 18 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 30 | 25 | 29 |
| CSKA | 18 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 25 | 15 | 28 |
| Krylia Sovetov | 18 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 24 | 14 | 27 |
| Zenit | 18 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 29 | 24 | 25 |
| Lokomotiv | 17 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 22 | 17 | 25 |
| Spartak N | 18 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 18 | 20 | 24 |
| FC Moscow | 18 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 19 | 20 | 22 |
| Terek | 18 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 15 | 25 | 21 |
| Tom | 18 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 16 | 24 | 19 |
| Saturn | 18 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 15 | 20 | 18 |
| Luch-Energiya | 18 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 13 | 22 | 17 |
| Shinnik | 17 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 19 | 28 | 14 |
| Khimki | 18 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 22 | 38 | 13 |

## SCOTLAND

**Saturday, August 9**

**Aberdeen 0**
**Inverness 2** (Barrowman 27, McBain 90) Att: 12,659

**Falkirk 0**
**Rangers 1** (Velicka 64) Att: 6,669

**Hearts 3** (Stewart 25, Ksanavicius 40, Mikoliunas 82)
**Motherwell 2** (Clarkson 33, 81) Att: 14,219

**Kilmarnock 1** (Hamill 80)
**Hibernian 0** Att: 6,168

**Sunday, August 10**

**Celtic 1** (Robson pen 62)
**St Mirren 0** Att: 57,441

**Monday, August 11**

**Hamilton 3** (Stevenson 29, McArthur 39, Graham 63)
**Dundee United 1** (McLaughlin og 23) Att: 4,385

**Saturday, August 16**

**Hibernian 3** (Nish 1, 25, Hanlon 47)
**Falkirk 2** (Higdon 30, 53) Att: 12,445

**Inverness 0**
**Hamilton 1** (Offiong 45) Att: 3,595

**Motherwell 0**
**Aberdeen 1** (Mulgrew 86) Att: 5,872

**Rangers 2** (Lafferty 37, Boyd pen 90)
**Hearts 0** Att: 48,191

**St Mirren 0**
**Kilmarnock 0** Att: 4,176

**Sunday, August 17**

**Dundee United 1** (Sandaza 79)
**Celtic 1** (Hartley 51) Att: 11,648

| SCOTLAND | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hamilton | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| Rangers | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 6 |
| Celtic | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Kilmarnock | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Inverness | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Hibernian | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Hearts | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Aberdeen | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| St Mirren | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Dundee Utd | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Falkirk | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 |
| Motherwell | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
2 David Clarkson (Motherwell)
2 Michael Higdon (Falkirk)
2 Colin Nish (Hibernian)

## SERBIA

**Aug 16:** OFK 1 Jagodina 0; Napredak 0 Hajduk 1.
**Aug 17:** Borac 0 Cukaricki 0; Partizan 1 Banat 0; Vojvodina 2 Red Star 0; Rad 0 Javor 0.

| SERBIA | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vojvodina | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Hajduk | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| OFK | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Partizan | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Borac | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Cukaricki | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Javor | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Rad | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Banat | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Jagodina | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Napredak | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Red Star | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

## SPAIN

## SUPER CUP – 1st leg

*Aug 17*
**Valencia 3** (Mata 55, Villa 59, Vicente 80)
**Real Madrid 2** (Van Nistelrooy 13, 67)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 40,000

## SWEDEN

**July 26:** Halmstads 0 Trelleborgs 0; Gefle 0 IFK Gothenburg 1.
**July 27:** Djurgardens 1 Helsingborgs 2; Malmo 3 Kalmar 2.
**July 28:** GAIS 0 Sundsvall 2; AIK 1 Ljungskile 0; Orebro 1 Hammarby 1.
**July 30:** Norrkoping 0 Elfsborg 1.
**Aug 2:** IFK Gothenburg 2 Malmo 0.
**Aug 3:** Trelleborgs 3 Orebro 3; Hammarby 2 Ljungskile 2; Gefle 4 Halmstads 0.
**Aug 4:** Helsingborgs 2 Sundsvall 1; Kalmar 3 AIK 2; Elfsborg 1 GAIS 0.
**Aug 9:** Orebro 4 IFK Gothenburg 2.
**Aug 10:** AIK 0 Elfsborg 2; GAIS 0 Trelleborgs 0; Ljungskile 2 Kalmar 4; Malmo 1 Djurgardens 2.
**Aug 11:** Halmstads 3 Helsingborgs 1; Sundsvall 1 Hammarby 2.
**Aug 12:** Norrkoping 2 Gefle 1.
**Aug 15:** Hammarby 2 GAIS 4.
**Aug 16:** Sundsvall 1 AIK 1.
**Aug 17:** Helsingborgs 0 Ljungskile 1; Trelleborgs 1 Norrkoping 0; Djurgardens 2 Gefle 0; Kalmar 2 Orebro 2.

| SWEDEN | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kalmar | 19 | 13 | 3 | 3 | 46 | 22 | 42 |
| Elfsborg | 18 | 12 | 4 | 2 | 25 | 5 | 40 |
| Helsingborgs | 19 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 32 | 23 | 34 |
| Hammarby | 19 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 30 | 24 | 33 |
| IFK Goth'burg | 18 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 28 | 18 | 32 |
| AIK | 19 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 22 | 21 | 29 |
| GAIS | 19 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 20 | 19 | 24 |
| Malmo | 18 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 26 | 27 | 24 |
| Halmstads | 18 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| Djurgardens | 18 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 19 | 24 | 24 |
| Trelleborgs | 19 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 18 | 20 | 22 |
| Orebro | 19 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 18 | 28 | 21 |
| Sundsvall | 19 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 20 | 27 | 17 |
| Ljungskile | 19 | 5 | 2 | 12 | 18 | 33 | 17 |
| Gefle | 19 | 4 | 2 | 13 | 15 | 27 | 14 |
| Norrkoping | 18 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 15 | 33 | 10 |

## SWITZERLAND

**July 26:** Lucerne 0 Neuchatel Xamax 1; Basle 2 Bellinzona 0.
**July 27:** Aarau 2 Zurich 1; Young Boys 0 Vaduz 0.
**July 30:** Grasshopper 3 Sion 1.
**Aug 2:** Sion 2 Basle 0; Neuchatel Xamax 0 Aarau 0.
**Aug 3:** Vaduz 1 Grasshopper 1; Zurich 2 Young Boys 1; Bellinzona 2 Lucerne 2.
**Aug 6:** Bellinzona 1 Aarau 1.
**Aug 9:** Basle 4 Vaduz 0; Aarau 1 Lucerne 0; Sion 0 Bellinzona 2.
**Aug 10:** Young Boys 2 Neuchatel Xamax 1; Grasshopper 2 Zurich 2.
**Aug 16:** Vaduz 1 Sion 2.
**Aug 17:** Neuchatel Xamax 1 Grasshopper 1; Zurich 1 Basle 4; Lucerne 0 Young Boys 3.

| SWITZERLAND | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Basle | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 4 | 15 |
| Aarau | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 3 | 14 |
| Zurich | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| Sion | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 9 |
| Neuchatel X | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 8 |
| Young Boys | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| Grasshopper | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| Bellinzona | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| Vaduz | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 5 |
| Lucerne | 6 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 10 | 1 |

## UKRAINE

**July 25:** Dnipro 1 Dynamo 3.
**July 26:** Metalurh Donetsk 1 Chornomorets 0; Arsenal 1 Kryvbas 1; Vorskla 0 Zorya 1.
**July 27:** Illichivets 2 Lviv 0; Karpaty 1 Shakhtar 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 0 Kharkiv 0.
**July 30:** Metalist 3 Tavriya 0.
**Aug 1:** Chornomorets 3 Karpaty 0.
**Aug 2:** Kharkiv 1 Arsenal 1; Lviv 0 Dnipro 1; Kryvbas 1 Metalurh Donetsk 2; Dynamo 1 Metalist 2.
**Aug 3:** Zorya 0 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0; Shakhtar 3 Illichivets 0; Tavriya 1 Vorskla 3.
**Aug 8:** Dnipro 0 Shakhtar 0.
**Aug 9:** Metalurh Donetsk 3 Kharkiv 0; Karpaty 1 Illichivets 0; Vorskla 2 Dynamo 2; Chornomorets 2 Kryvbas 0.
**Aug 10:** Arsenal 1 Zorya 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 1 Tavriya 0; Metalist 0 Lviv 0.
**Aug 15:** Kryvbas 1 Karpaty 1.
**Aug 16:** Zorya 0 Metalurh Donetsk 2; Lviv 0 Vorskla 0; Kharkiv 1 Chornomorets 1; Tavriya 3 Arsenal 1.
**Aug 17:** Illichivets 1 Dnipro 2; Shakhtar 2 Metalist 2; Dynamo 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0.

| UKRAINE | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Metalurh D | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 15 |
| Dynamo | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 10 |
| Metalist | 5 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 9 |
| Vorskla | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 8 |
| Dnipro | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| Chornomorets | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 7 |
| Shakhtar | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Arsenal | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Zorya | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Lviv | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Kryvbas | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Metalurh Z | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Karpaty | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| Tavriya | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| Kharkiv | 5 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 3 |
| Illichivets | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 3 |

# SOUTH AMERICA

## RECOPA

(2007 Libertadores Cup winners v 2007 Sudamericana Cup winners)

### 1st leg

*Aug 13*

**Arsenal (Arg) 1** (Sava 25)
**Boca Juniors (Arg) 3** (Palermo 20, Palacio 31, Battaglia 90)
**HT:** 1-2. **Ref:** Favale (Arg)

## SUDAMERICANA CUP

### Preliminary round

*1st legs - July 29-Aug 12; 2nd legs - Aug 5-21*

Olimpia (Par) v Blooming (Bol)
4-2, 0-1 (agg 4-3)
River Plate (Uru) v Universidad Catolica (Chl)
2-0, 0-4 (agg 2-4)
UA Maracaibo (Ven) v America (Col)
0-0, 2-4 (agg 2-4)
Universitario (Per) v Deportivo Quito (Ecu)
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)

## ARGENTINA

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Friday, August 8**

**Gimnasia La Plata 0**
**Newell's Old Boys 1** (Re 24)

**San Martin Tucuman 2** (Turdo 13, Monge 32)
**Huracan 0**

**Saturday, August 9**

**Arsenal 3** (Sava 5, pen 69, Gomez 56)
**Argentinos Juniors 0**

**Banfield 1** (Bertolo 8)
**Godoy Cruz 2** (Castillo 2, 20)

**Rosario Central 3** (Zelaya 5, Danelon 10, Kily Gonzalez 51)
**Estudiantes 2** (Boselli 40, 52)

**Velez Sarsfield 0**
**Independiente 0**

**Sunday, August 10**

**Boca Juniors 4** (Noir 47, Gracian 57, Battaglia 78, Vargas 89)
**Gimnasia Jujuy 0**

**Colon Santa Fe 1** (Capurro 39)
**River Plate 1** (Flores 54)

**Racing Club 0**
**Lanus 2** (Sand 64, 75)

**San Lorenzo 0**
**Tigre 1** (Blanco 26)

**Friday, August 15**

**Estudiantes 2** (Fernandez 7, 36)
**Banfield 2** (Bustamante 2, Civelli 19)

**Independiente 1** (Gandin 89)
**San Martin Tucuman 0**

**Saturday, August 16**

**Argentinos Juniors 4** (Scotti 55, Ortigoza pen 61, Mercier 64, Aban 86)
**Velez Sarsfield 1** (Cristaldo 70)

**Gimnasia Jujuy 1** (Carranza pen 71)
**Colon Santa Fe 4** (Garce 35, Capurro 44, Aguilar 81, Ramirez pen 84)

**Godoy Cruz 1** (Aguirre 28)
**San Lorenzo 2** (Bergessio 52, Menseguez 72)

**Tigre 2** (Castano 10, 25)
**Arsenal 1** (Leguizamon 14)

**Sunday, August 17**

**Huracan 1** (Colzera 53)
**Racing Club 0**

**Lanus 1** (Biglieri 8)
**Gimnasia La Plata 1** (Villar 61)

**River Plate 2** (Tuzzio 82, Rios 90)
**Rosario Central 0**

**ARGENTINA – OPENING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tigre | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| Colon | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| Lanus | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| River Plate | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Independiente | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Boca Juniors | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3 |
| Arsenal | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| San Martin T | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Newell's | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Argentinos Jrs | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Godoy Cruz | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| San Lorenzo | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Rosario | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Huracan | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Estudiantes | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| Banfield | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Gimnasia LP | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Velez | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Racing | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Gimnasia J | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 0 |

## BOLIVIA

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Aug 3:** La Paz 3 Universitario 2; Real Potosi 2 The Strongest 0; Aurora 1 Guabira 0; Bolivar 3 San Jose 2; Real Mamore 0 Blooming 1; Oriente 2 Jorge Wilstermann 0.
**Aug 8:** Guabira 1 Oriente 1; Universitario 1 Bolivar 1; The Strongest 1 La Paz 0; Blooming 2 Aurora 1.
**Aug 11:** Jorge Wilstermann 1 Real Mamore 0; San Jose 1 Real Potosi 2.
**Aug 17:** Real Mamore 2 Aurora 1; Oriente 2 Blooming 0; Jorge Wilstermann 3 Guabira 0; Bolivar 0 Real Potosi 1; La Paz 1 San Jose 1; Universitario 0 The Strongest 0.

**BOLIVIA – CLOSING – GROUP A**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oriente | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| J Wilstermann | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Blooming | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Aurora | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Real Mamore | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Guabira | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 |

**GROUP B**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Real Potosi | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 9 |
| Bolivar | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| La Paz | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| The Strongest | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Universitario | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| San Jose | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 1 |

## BRAZIL

**July 26:** Nautico 1 Coritiba 2; Ipatinga 1 Internacional 0; Fluminense 1 Cruzeiro 3.
**July 27:** Gremio 1 Palmeiras 1; Santos 5 Vasco da Gama 2; Goias 1 Sport Recife 2; Atletico Paranaense 0 Figueirense 0; Flamengo 0 Botafogo 0; Atletico Mineiro 2 Vitoria 1; Sao Paulo 3 Portuguesa 1.
**July 30:** Vitoria 2 Atletico Paranaense 1; Cruzeiro 4 Nautico 2; Portuguesa 3 Fluminense 1; Botafogo 2 Goias 0; Palmeiras 1 Flamengo 0; Figueirense 1 Sao Paulo 1; Internacional 0 Santos 1.
**July 31:** Coritiba 0 Gremio 1; Vasco da Gama 6 Atletico Mineiro 1; Sport Recife 3 Ipatinga 1.
**Aug 2:** Nautico 1 Figueirense 2; Goias 4 Portuguesa 0; Fluminense 1 Internacional 2.
**Aug 3:** Flamengo 1 Cruzeiro 2; Ipatinga 1 Palmeiras 2; Sao Paulo 4 Vasco da Gama 0; Gremio 2 Vitoria 0; Atletico Mineiro 2 Sport Recife 1; Santos 1 Coritiba 3; Atletico Paranaense 0 Botafogo 3.
**Aug 6:** Gremio 1 Ipatinga 0; Vasco da Gama 0 Coritiba 2; Sport Recife 2 Portuguesa 0; Atletico Paranaense 2 Nautico 0; Santos 2 Atletico Mineiro 3; Goias 2 Flamengo 1; Fluminense 3 Sao Paulo 1.
**Aug 7:** Cruzeiro 2 Internacional 0; Palmeiras 3 Vitoria 0; Figueirense 1 Botafogo 2.
**Aug 9:** Flamengo 1 Atletico Paranaense 0; Atletico Mineiro 0 Gremio 4; Sao Paulo 2 Goias 1.
**Aug 10:** Portuguesa 2 Cruzeiro 1; Vitoria 5 Vasco da Gama 0; Botafogo 1 Palmeiras 0; Coritiba 3 Sport Recife 0; Ipatinga 2 Fluminense 1; Nautico 1 Santos 0; Internacional 1 Figueirense 1.
**Aug 16:** Figueirense 2 Portuguesa 1; Cruzeiro 2 Vitoria 1; Atletico Paranaense 5 Ipatinga 0.
**Aug 17:** Vasco da Gama 4 Internacional 0; Palmeiras 1 Coritiba 0; Sport Recife 0 Botafogo 1; Santos 2 Flamengo 2; Goias 3 Nautico 0; Gremio 1 Sao Paulo 0; Fluminense 1 Atletico Mineiro 0.
**Aug 20:** Ipatinga 1 Santos 1; Sao Paulo 3 Atletico Paranaense 1; Nautico 1 Fluminense 3; Coritiba 3 Figueirense 0; Vitoria 0 Sport Recife 0; Internacional 4 Palmeiras 1; Botafogo 1 Cruzeiro 0.
**Aug 21:** Flamengo 2 Gremio 1; Atletico Mineiro 1 Goias 1; Portuguesa 0 Vasco da Gama 1.

**BRAZIL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gremio | 21 | 13 | 5 | 3 | 37 | 14 | 44 |
| Cruzeiro | 21 | 12 | 3 | 6 | 34 | 21 | 39 |
| Botafogo | 21 | 11 | 4 | 6 | 31 | 19 | 37 |
| Palmeiras | 21 | 11 | 4 | 6 | 34 | 25 | 37 |
| Sao Paulo | 21 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 36 | 23 | 36 |
| Flamengo | 21 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 34 | 22 | 35 |
| Coritiba | 21 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 32 | 20 | 35 |
| Vitoria | 21 | 10 | 3 | 8 | 31 | 23 | 33 |
| Internacional | 21 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 25 | 25 | 29 |
| Sport Recife | 21 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 21 | 25 | 28 |
| Figueirense | 21 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 26 | 39 | 28 |
| Goias | 21 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 27 | 29 | 27 |
| Vasco | 21 | 7 | 4 | 10 | 35 | 39 | 25 |
| At Mineiro | 21 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 26 | 39 | 25 |
| At Paranaense | 21 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 23 | 24 | 23 |
| Fluminense | 21 | 6 | 4 | 11 | 25 | 30 | 22 |
| Portuguesa | 21 | 6 | 4 | 11 | 27 | 42 | 22 |
| Nautico | 21 | 6 | 3 | 12 | 21 | 35 | 21 |
| Santos | 21 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 24 | 36 | 19 |
| Ipatinga | 21 | 4 | 5 | 12 | 21 | 40 | 17 |

## CHILE

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**July 26:** Everton 5 Dep La Serena 5; Union Espanola 1 Cobresal 1; Univ de Concepcion 4 Osorno 1; O'Higgins 4 Santiago Morning 1; Univ de Chile 4 Dep Melipilla 1.
**July 27:** Nublense 1 Colo Colo 2; Rangers 1 Palestino 1; Cobreloa 1 Antofagasta 2; Audax Italiano 0 Huachipato 3.
**Aug 2:** Palestino 3 Univ de Concepcion 1; Audax Italiano 2 Everton 1; Univ de Chile 3 Cobreloa 1; Huachipato 1 Rangers 2.
**Aug 3:** Dep Melipilla 3 Osorno 1; Santiago Morning 1 Union Espanola 2; Univ Catolica 1 Colo Colo 0; Antofagasta 2 O'Higgins 1; Cobresal 1 Nublense 0.
**Aug 9:** Colo Colo 1 Audax Italiano 1; Dep La Serena 2 Univ de Chile 2; Univ de Concepcion 2 Santiago Morning 2; Osorno 0 Antofagasta 1.
**Aug 10:** Cobreloa 3 Rangers 0; Cobresal 2 Huachipato 2; Everton 2 Dep Melipilla 1; O'Higgins 1 Univ Catolica 1; Nublense 2 Palestino 1.
**Aug 14:** Palestino 0 Univ de Chile 3.
**Aug 15:** Univ de Concepcion 1 Audax Italiano 1.
**Aug 16:** Osorno 0 Cobresal 3.
**Aug 17:** Santiago Morning 2 Nublense 2; Rangers 2 Everton 0; Univ Catolica 0 Huachipato 4; Dep La Serena 2 Antofagasta 0.
**Aug 20:** Dep Melipilla 2 O'Higgins 1.

**CHILE – CLOSING – GROUP 1**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Univ de Chile | 8 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 21 | 9 | 19 |
| Colo Colo | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 13 | 8 | 14 |
| U Espanola | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 11 | 9 |
| Nublense | 8 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 15 | 6 |

**GROUP 2**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rangers | 9 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 14 | 12 | 17 |
| Everton | 9 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 15 | 13 | 16 |
| La Serena | 8 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 19 | 13 | 13 |
| Univ Catolica | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Osorno | 9 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 12 | 22 | 6 |

**GROUP 3**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| O'Higgins | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 17 | 11 | 14 |
| Palestino | 9 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 11 | 12 |
| U Concepcion | 9 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 17 | 16 | 10 |
| S Morning | 8 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 11 | 13 | 10 |
| Dep Melipilla | 9 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 8 |

**GROUP 4**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Huachipato | 9 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 16 | 11 | 12 |
| Antofagasta | 9 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 9 | 15 | 12 |
| Audax Italiano | 8 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| Cobresal | 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 13 | 9 |
| Cobreloa | 8 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 11 | 15 | 8 |

## COLOMBIA

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**July 25:** Quindio 2 Chico 1.
**July 26:** Millonarios 2 Dep Cali 3; Pereira 3 Indep Medellin 1.
**July 27:** At Nacional 2 Once Caldas 0; At Junior 2 Bucaramanga 0; Cucuta 2 Envigado 2; Tolima 1 La Equidad 0; Dep Pasto 1 At Huila 0; America 2 Indep Santa Fe 0.
**Aug 2:** At Huila 1 Chico 1; Dep Cali 5 Pereira 0; Quindio 0 Tolima 0.
**Aug 3:** La Equidad 2 Millonarios 3; Indep Medellin 1 Cucuta 0; Envigado 1 At Junior 0; Bucaramanga 1 At Nacional 1; Indep Santa Fe 0 Dep Pasto 0; Once Caldas 2 America 0.
**Aug 9:** At Huila 2 Quindio 2; Dep Pasto 0 Once Caldas 0; Millonarios 3 Tolima 1.
**Aug 10:** Chico 1 Indep Santa Fe 2; America 1 Bucaramanga 1; At Nacional 1 Envigado 2; At Junior 2 Indep Medellin 1; Cucuta 2 Dep Cali 1; Pereira 1 La Equidad 2.
**Aug 16:** Quindio 1 Millonarios 2; Indep Medellin 0 At Nacional 1; Once Caldas 1 Chico 0.
**Aug 17:** Tolima 1 Pereira 0; La Equidad 2 Cucuta 0; Dep Cali 1 At Junior 2; Envigado 0 America 0; Bucaramanga 1 Dep Pasto 0; Indep Santa Fe 1 At Huila 0.

**COLOMBIA – CLOSING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Millonarios | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 7 | 12 |
| Ind Santa Fe | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 10 |
| Once Caldas | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 10 |
| Tolima | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 10 |
| At Junior | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 9 |
| Envigado | 5 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 9 |
| Bucaramanga | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| At Nacional | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 7 |
| Dep Cali | 5 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 8 | 6 |
| Quindio | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| La Equidad | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| At Huila | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| America | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Dep Pasto | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Pereira | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 5 |
| Chico | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| Cucuta | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 4 |
| Ind Medellin | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 3 |

## ECUADOR

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**July 27:** Univ Catolica 0 Espoli 1; Dep Quito 2 Olmedo 2; Dep Cuenca 0 LDU 0; Macara 1 Tecnico Univ 1; El Nacional 1 Dep Azogues 0; Barcelona 0 Emelec 1.
**Aug 1:** Tecnico Univ 2 Dep Cuenca 1.
**Aug 2:** Espoli 0 LDU 1; Dep Quito 1 El Nacional 0; Univ Catolica 1 Macara 2.
**Aug 3:** Olmedo 0 Barcelona 1; Emelec 0 Dep Azogues 1.
**Aug 8:** Dep Cuenca 2 Univ Catolica 2.
**Aug 9:** Dep Azogues 0 Olmedo 2; LDU 0 Tecnico Univ 0; Macara 2 Espoli 3.
**Aug 10:** El Nacional 1 Emelec 0; Barcelona 1 Dep Quito 0.
**Aug 16:** Olmedo 3 Dep Azogues 2; Espoli 0 Macara 1.
**Aug 17:** Dep Quito 0 Barcelona 0; Emelec 1 El Nacional 0; Univ Catolica 2 Dep Cuenca 1; Tecnico Univ 1 LDU 1.

**ECUADOR – CLOSING – GROUP A**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Olmedo | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 13 | 6 | 13 |
| Barcelona | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 13 |
| Emelec | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 9 |
| Dep Quito | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 8 |
| El Nacional | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 6 |
| Dep Azogues | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 11 | 3 |

**GROUP B**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Macara | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 11 |
| Tecnico Univ | 6 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 6 | 10 |
| Univ Catolica | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| Espoli | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| LDU | 6 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Dep Cuenca | 6 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 3 |

## PARAGUAY

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**July 25:** Olimpia 0 Nacional 0.
**July 26:** Tacuary 0 Sol de America 1; Libertad 1 Pettirossi 0.
**July 27:** 12 de Octubre 3 2 de Mayo 1; Sportivo Luqueno 3 3 de Febrero 2; Cerro Porteno 1 Guarani 5.
**Aug 2:** 3 de Febrero 1 Libertad 2.
**Aug 3:** Guarani 1 Sportivo Luqueno 0; Pettirossi 1 Tacuary 2; Nacional 2 2 de Mayo 0; Cerro Porteno 0 12 de Octubre 0; Sol de America 4 Olimpia 3.
**Aug 8:** Olimpia 4 Pettirossi 0.
**Aug 9:** Tacuary 2 3 de Febrero 1; Libertad 1 Guarani 1.
**Aug 10:** 12 de Octubre 2 Nacional 1; 2 de Mayo 2 Sol de America 3; Sportivo Luqueno 0 Cerro Porteno 0.
**Aug 15:** Pettirossi 1 2 de Mayo 1; Sol de America 2 Nacional 0.
**Aug 16:** Cerro Porteno 0 Libertad 0; 3 de Febrero 2 Olimpia 0.
**Aug 17:** Sportivo Luqueno 2 12 de Octubre 2; Guarani 3 Tacuary 1.
**Aug 20:** 12 de Octubre 2 Sol de America 0; Nacional 0 Pettirossi 0; Tacuary 1 Cerro Porteno 2; 2 de Mayo 1 3 de Febrero 1.

**PARAGUAY – CLOSING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sol America | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 7 | 12 |
| 12 de Octubre | 5 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 4 | 11 |
| Guarani | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 10 |
| Libertad | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 8 |
| Tacuary | 5 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 6 |
| Cerro Porteno | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| S Luqueno | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Nacional | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Olimpia | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| 3 de Febrero | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 4 |
| 2 de Mayo | 5 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 2 |
| Pettirossi | 5 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 2 |

## PERU

### CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

**July 26:** Universidad SMP 3 Sport Ancash 0; Melgar 2 Juan Aurich 0; Alianza Lima 1 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Cesar Vallejo 1 Sporting Cristal 0.
**July 27:** Sport Boys 0 Cienciano 0; Alianza Atletico 2 At Minero 0; Jose Galvez 2 Universitario 0.
**July 30:** Cienciano 2 Jose Galvez 1; At Minero 2 Melgar 0; Sporting Cristal 1 Universidad SMP 0; Coronel Bolognesi 1 Cesar Vallejo 2; Sport Ancash 0 Alianza Atletico 0.
**Aug 2:** Universitario 2 Sport Ancash 2; Sport Boys 1 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Alianza Atletico 1 Alianza Lima 0.
**Aug 3:** Jose Galvez 3 Sporting Cristal 2; Cesar Vallejo 1 At Minero 2; Universidad SMP 1 Juan Aurich 0; Melgar 1 Cienciano 0.
**Aug 6:** Sport Ancash 3 Alianza Lima 1; Cienciano 2 Cesar Vallejo 1; Juan Aurich 0 Jose Galvez 1; Sporting Cristal 4 Melgar 1; At Minero 5 Sport Boys 0; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Alianza Atletico 4.
**Aug 9:** Coronel Bolognesi 3 Jose Galvez 1.
**Aug 10:** Sport Ancash 2 Sport Boys 1; Cienciano 2 Universitario 1; Sporting Cristal 2 Juan Aurich 0; At Minero 0 Universidad SMP 3; Alianza Lima 2 Melgar 1; Alianza Atletico 0 Cesar Vallejo 1.
**Aug 13:** Juan Aurich 4 Sport Ancash 1; Universitario 1 Sporting Cristal 2; Jose Galvez 0 At Minero 0; Cesar Vallejo 0 Alianza Lima 2; Universidad SMP 1 Cienciano 1; Melgar 3 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Sport Boys 0 Alianza Atletico 0.
**Aug 16:** Sport Boys 0 Melgar 1; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Universitario 1.
**Aug 17:** Sport Ancash 1 Cesar Vallejo 0; At Minero 2 Juan Aurich 0; Cienciano 2 Sporting Cristal 1; Alianza Atletico 3 Jose Galvez 2; Alianza Lima 1 Universidad SMP 3.
**Aug 20:** Alianza Lima 2 Sport Boys 0.

**PERU – CLOSING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al Atletico | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 14 |
| Cienciano | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 14 |
| Univ SMP | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 3 | 13 |
| At Minero | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 6 | 13 |
| S Cristal | 7 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 12 | 8 | 12 |
| Melgar | 7 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 10 | 12 |
| Sport Ancash | 7 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 11 | 11 |
| Jose Galvez | 7 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Al Lima | 7 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 9 | 10 | 9 |
| Cesar Vallejo | 7 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 9 |
| C Bolognesi | 7 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 13 | 9 |
| Universitario | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 4 |
| Juan Aurich | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 3 |
| Sport Boys | 7 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 12 | 2 |

## VENEZUELA

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Aug 9:** Anzoategui 3 Caracas 1.
**Aug 10:** Dep Tachira 3 Estrella Roja 2; Minerven 3 Zamora 0; Dep Italia 2 El Vigia 0; UA Maracaibo 3 Monagas 2; Carabobo 1 Zulia 0; Estudiantes 3 Mineros 0; Llaneros 2 Aragua 0; Guaros 1 Portuguesa 0.
**Aug 16:** Aragua 4 Estudiantes 1; Estrella Roja 1 Carabobo 1.
**Aug 17:** Monagas 0 Dep Italia 0; El Vigia 2 Minerven 2; Zamora 0 Dep Tachira 1; UA Maracaibo 2 Guaros 1; Portuguesa 0 Llaneros 1; Mineros 1 Anzoategui 1; Caracas 0 Zulia 2.

**VENEZUELA – OPENING**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Llaneros | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 6 |
| UA Maracaibo | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 6 |
| Dep Tachira | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Minerven | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| Anzoategui | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Dep Italia | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Carabobo | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Aragua | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Zulia | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Estudiantes | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Guaros | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Estrella Roja | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Monagas | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| El Vigia | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Mineros | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Portuguesa | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Caracas | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| Zamora | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

# CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

## MEXICO

### OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

**July 26:** San Luis 2 Morelia 2; Cruz Azul 2 Guadalajara 2; Tigres 0 Pachuca 0; Indios 0 Tecos UAG 1; Atlas 5 Jaguares 0; Atlante 2 Toluca 1.
**July 27:** Puebla 2 Monterrey 2; Pumas UNAM 2 Necaxa 0; America 3 Santos 2.
**Aug 1:** Tecos UAG 1 Guadalajara 0.
**Aug 2:** Jaguares 1 Tigres 3; Monterrey 2 Indios 0; Pachuca 2 San Luis 3; Atlas 2 Cruz Azul 4; Necaxa 0 Puebla 0.
**Aug 3:** Morelia 0 Atlante 0; Toluca 2 America 1; Santos 1 Pumas UNAM 1.
**Aug 6:** San Luis 2 Cruz Azul 1.
**Aug 9:** San Luis 2 Jaguares 0; Cruz Azul 2 Tecos UAG 0; Guadalajara 1 Monterrey 1; Tigres 3 Atlas 0; Indios 2 Necaxa 3; Atlante 2 Pachuca 1.
**Aug 10:** Puebla 0 Santos 0; Pumas UNAM 2 Toluca 1; America 1 Morelia 1.
**Aug 13:** Toluca 0 Guadalajara 1.
**Aug 16:** Jaguares 1 Atlante 1; Monterrey 2 Tecos UAG 4; Pachuca 1 America 1; Atlas 0 San Luis 1.
**Aug 17:** Morelia 1 Pumas UNAM 0; Toluca 3 Puebla 1; Necaxa 2 Guadalajara 2; Santos 3 Indios 0.

**MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 1**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Atlante | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Santos | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 |
| Monterrey | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| Puebla | 4 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Pachuca | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| Indios | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 0 |

**GROUP 2**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tecos UAG | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 9 |
| Cruz Azul | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 7 |
| Pumas UNAM | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 7 |
| Morelia | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| Guadalajara | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| America | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 5 |

**GROUP 3**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| San Luis | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 10 | 5 | 13 |
| Tigres | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Toluca | 5 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Necaxa | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| Atlas | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 3 |
| Jaguares | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 11 | 1 |

## UNITED STATES

**July 27:** San Jose 1 New York 1; Dallas 4 Los Angeles 0; Kansas City 0 Chicago 0; Colorado 0 Columbus 2.
**July 28:** Salt Lake 2 Toronto 1.
**Aug 2:** DC United 2 Kansas City 0; Chicago 1 Chivas USA 0; Houston 2 Columbus 0.
**Aug 3:** San Jose 3 Los Angeles 2; Toronto 0 Dallas 2.
**Aug 9:** Colorado 0 Toronto 1; New England 1 Chicago 2; Kansas City 3 Chivas USA 2.
**Aug 10:** New York 4 DC United 1.
**Aug 14:** Chivas USA 2 Los Angeles 2.
**Aug 16:** Columbus 2 Dallas 1; Chicago 0 DC United 1; Houston 4 Salt Lake 3; Colorado 2 Kansas City 1; San Jose 4 New England 0.
**Aug 17:** New York 2 Toronto 0.
**Aug 20:** New England 2 DC United 1; Houston 4 Chivas USA 0.
**Aug 21:** Los Angeles 0 Chicago 1.

**UNITED STATES – EASTERN CONFERENCE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New England | 20 | 11 | 3 | 6 | 28 | 26 | 36 |
| Chicago | 21 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 28 | 16 | 35 |
| Columbus | 20 | 10 | 4 | 6 | 31 | 28 | 34 |
| DC United | 20 | 9 | 1 | 10 | 33 | 34 | 28 |
| New York | 20 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 25 | 28 | 28 |
| Toronto | 20 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 21 | 26 | 25 |
| Kansas City | 20 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 21 | 27 | 25 |

**WESTERN CONFERENCE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Houston | 20 | 8 | 8 | 4 | 29 | 22 | 32 |
| Salt Lake | 20 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 25 | 24 | 27 |
| Dallas | 20 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 28 | 26 | 25 |
| Colorado | 20 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 29 | 27 | 24 |
| Los Angeles | 21 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 40 | 43 | 24 |
| Chivas USA | 20 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 26 | 31 | 23 |
| San Jose | 20 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 19 | 25 | 21 |

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**

14 Landon Donovan (Los Angeles)
13 Kenny Cooper (Dallas)
12 Edson Buddle (Los Angeles)
11 Luciano Emilio (DC United)

# AFRICA

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

**Group A**

**Aug 2:** ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 0 Al Ahly (Egy) 0.
**Aug 3:** Zamalek (Egy) 1 Dynamos (Zim) 0.
**Aug 16:** Zamalek 0 ASEC Abidjan 0.
**Aug 17:** Al Ahly 2 Dynamos 1.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al Ahly | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Zamalek | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Dynamos | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| ASEC | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |

**Group B**

**Aug 2:** TP Mazembe (DRC) 0 Al Hilal (Sud) 0.
**Aug 3:** Enyimba (Nig) 2 Cotonsport (Cam) 0.
**Aug 15:** Al Hilal 1 Cotonsport 1.
**Aug 17:** Enyimba 2 TP Mazembe

# WORLD CUP QUALIFYING GUIDE

## AFRICA

**6 finals berths (one of which goes automatically to hosts South Africa)**

### 1st stage

The 10 lowest-ranked countries of the 53 entrants were drawn in five two-leg ties. However, the Central African Republic and Sao Tome e Principe, who had been drawn together, both withdrew. FIFA awarded byes to the two highest-ranked countries of the remaining eight – Swaziland and Seychelles – and reordered the draw. The winners advanced to the 2nd stage.

Djibouti v Somalia*
1-0
Madagascar v Comoros Islands
6-2, 4-0 (agg 10-2)
Sierra Leone v Guinea-Bissau
1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)

*1st legs - 14/17.10.07; 2nd legs - 17.11.07*

**Decided on a single match, in Djibouti, 16.11.07*

### 2nd stage

The 48 countries** are playing in 12 round-robin groups, from which the winners and the eight best runners-up*** will advance to the 3rd stage.

#### Group 1

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cameroon | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 10 |
| Cape Verde Is | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 9 |
| Tanzania | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Mauritius | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1 |

31.05.08 Cameroon-Cape Verde Is ..... 2-0
31.05.08 Tanzania-Mauritius ..... 1-1
07.06.08 Cape Verde Is-Tanzania..... 1-0
08.06.08 Mauritius-Cameroon ..... 0-3
14.06.08 Tanzania-Cameroon ..... 0-0
15.06.08 Mauritius-Cape Verde Is..... 0-1
21.06.08 Cameroon-Tanzania ..... 2-1
22.06.08 Cape Verde Is-Mauritius..... 3-1
06.09.08 Cape Verde Is-Cameroon
07.09.08 Mauritius-Tanzania
10.10.08 Tanzania-Cape Verde Is
11.10.08 Cameroon-Mauritius

#### Group 2

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guinea | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 7 |
| Kenya | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Zimbabwe | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Namibia | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 3 |

31.05.08 Namibia-Kenya ..... 2-1
01.06.08 Guinea-Zimbabwe..... 0-0
07.06.08 Kenya-Guinea ..... 2-0
08.06.08 Zimbabwe-Namibia ..... 2-0
14.06.08 Kenya-Zimbabwe..... 2-0
14.06.08 Namibia-Guinea ..... 1-2
22.06.08 Guinea-Namibia ..... 4-0
22.06.08 Zimbabwe-Kenya..... 0-0
06.09.08 Kenya-Namibia
07.09.08 Zimbabwe-Guinea
10.10.08 Guinea-Kenya
10.10.08 Namibia-Zimbabwe

#### Group 3

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Benin | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 9 |
| Angola | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 7 |
| Uganda | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| Niger | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 0 |

31.05.08 Uganda-Niger..... 1-0
01.06.08 Angola-Benin ..... 3-0
08.06.08 Benin-Uganda..... 4-1
08.06.08 Niger-Angola..... 1-2
14.06.08 Niger-Benin..... 0-2
14.06.08 Uganda-Angola ..... 3-1
22.06.08 Benin-Niger..... 2-0
23.06.08 Angola-Uganda ..... 0-0
05.09.08 Niger-Uganda
07.09.08 Benin-Angola
10.10.08 Angola-Niger
12.10.08 Uganda-Benin

#### Group 4

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nigeria | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 12 |
| South Africa | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Sierra Leone | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Equat Guinea | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 3 |

01.06.08 Equat Guinea-Sierra Leone..... 2-0
01.06.08 Nigeria-South Africa ..... 2-0
07.06.08 Sierra Leone-Nigeria..... 0-1
07.06.08 South Africa-Equat Guinea..... 4-1
14.06.08 Sierra Leone-South Africa..... 1-0
15.06.08 Equat Guinea-Nigeria..... 0-1
21.06.08 Nigeria-Equat Guinea..... 2-0
21.06.08 South Africa-Sierra Leone..... 0-0
05.09.08 Sierra Leone-Equat Guinea
05.09.08 South Africa-Nigeria
10.10.08 Equat Guinea-South Africa
11.10.08 Nigeria-Sierra Leone

#### Group 5

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ghana | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 9 |
| Libya | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| Gabon | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| Lesotho | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 0 |

01.06.08 Ghana-Libya..... 3-0
07.06.08 Libya-Gabon..... 1-0
08.06.08 Lesotho-Ghana..... 2-3
14.06.08 Gabon-Ghana ..... 2-0
15.06.08 Lesotho-Libya ..... 0-1
20.06.08 Libya-Lesotho ..... 4-0
22.06.08 Ghana-Gabon ..... 2-0
28.06.08 Gabon-Lesotho..... 2-0
05.09.08 Libya-Ghana
07.09.08 Lesotho-Gabon
11.10.08 Gabon-Libya
12.10.08 Ghana-Lesotho

#### Group 6

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senegal | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 8 |
| Algeria | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Gambia | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Liberia | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 2 |

31.05.08 Senegal-Algeria ..... 1-0
01.06.08 Liberia-Gambia ..... 1-1
06.06.08 Algeria-Liberia ..... 3-0
08.06.08 Gambia-Senegal ..... 0-0
14.06.08 Gambia-Algeria ..... 1-0
15.06.08 Liberia-Senegal ..... 2-2
20.06.08 Algeria-Gambia..... 1-0
21.06.08 Senegal-Liberia ..... 3-1
05.09.08 Algeria-Senegal
06.09.08 Gambia-Liberia
10.10.08 Senegal-Gambia
12.10.08 Liberia-Algeria

#### Group 7

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ivory Coast | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 8 |
| Botswana | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| Mozambique | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Madagascar | 4 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 |

31.05.08 Botswana-Madagascar..... 0-0
01.06.08 Ivory Coast-Mozambique..... 1-0
08.06.08 Madagascar-Ivory Coast ..... 0-0
08.06.08 Mozambique-Botswana..... 1-2
14.06.08 Botswana-Ivory Coast..... 1-1
15.06.08 Madagascar-Mozambique ..... 1-1
22.06.08 Ivory Coast-Botswana..... 4-0
22.06.08 Mozambique-Madagascar ..... 3-0
05.09.08 Mozambique-Ivory Coast
07.09.08 Madagascar-Botswana
10.10.08 Botswana-Mozambique
10.10.08 Ivory Coast-Madagascar

#### Group 8

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Morocco | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 4 | 9 |
| Rwanda | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 9 |
| Ethiopia | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 6 |
| Mauritania | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 14 | 0 |

31.05.08 Morocco-Ethiopia..... 3-0
31.05.08 Rwanda-Mauritania ..... 3-0
07.06.08 Mauritania-Morocco ..... 1-4
08.06.08 Ethiopia-Rwanda ..... 1-2
13.06.08 Mauritania-Ethiopia ..... 0-1
14.06.08 Rwanda-Morocco ..... 3-1
21.06.08 Morocco-Rwanda ..... 2-0
22.06.08 Ethiopia-Mauritania ..... 6-1
05.09.08 Ethiopia-Morocco
06.09.08 Mauritania-Rwanda
10.10.08 Morocco-Mauritania
10.10.08 Rwanda-Ethiopia

#### Group 9

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Burkina Faso | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 4 | 12 |
| Tunisia | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| Burundi | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Seychelles | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 0 |

01.06.08 Burundi-Seychelles..... 1-0
01.06.08 Tunisia-Burkina Faso ..... 1-2
07.06.08 Burkina Faso-Burundi..... 2-0
07.06.08 Seychelles-Tunisia..... 0-2
14.06.08 Seychelles-Burkina Faso ..... 2-3
15.06.08 Burundi-Tunisia..... 0-1
21.06.08 Burkina Faso-Seychelles ..... 4-1
21.06.08 Tunisia-Burundi..... 2-1
05.09.08 Seychelles-Burundi
06.09.08 Burkina Faso-Tunisia
10.10.08 Burundi-Burkina Faso
10.10.08 Tunisia-Seychelles

#### Group 10

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mali | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 9 |
| Congo | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Chad | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Sudan | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 3 |

01.06.08 Mali-Congo ..... 4-2
07.06.08 Chad-Mali ..... 1-2
08.06.08 Congo-Sudan ..... 1-0
14.06.08 Chad-Congo ..... 2-1
14.06.08 Sudan-Mali ..... 3-2
20.06.08 Congo-Chad ..... 2-0
22.06.08 Mali-Sudan ..... 3-0
06.09.08 Sudan-Chad
07.09.08 Congo-Mali
10.09.08 Chad-Sudan
11.10.08 Sudan-Congo
12.10.08 Mali-Chad

#### Group 11

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Swaziland | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Zambia | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Togo | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |

*Eritrea withdrew*

31.05.08 Togo-Zambia..... 1-0
08.06.08 Swaziland-Togo ..... 2-1
15.06.08 Swaziland-Zambia..... 0-0
21.06.08 Zambia-Swaziland ..... 1-0
05.09.08 Zambia-Togo
10.10.08 Togo-Swaziland

#### Group 12

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DR Congo | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 3 | 9 |
| Egypt | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 |
| Malawi | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 6 |
| Djibouti | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 23 | 0 |

31.05.08 Malawi-Djibouti ..... 8-1
01.06.08 Egypt-DR Congo..... 2-1
06.06.08 Djibouti-Egypt..... 0-4
08.06.08 DR Congo-Malawi ..... 1-0
13.06.08 Djibouti-DR Congo ..... 0-6
14.06.08 Malawi-Egypt..... 1-0
22.06.08 DR Congo-Djibouti ..... 5-1
22.06.08 Egypt-Malawi..... 2-0
05.09.08 Djibouti-Malawi
07.09.08 DR Congo-Egypt
10.10.08 Egypt-Djibouti
11.10.08 Malawi-DR Congo

***South Africa are participating despite having a finals berth guaranteed because the World Cup qualifying campaign doubles as the qualifying campaign for the 2010 African Nations Cup.*

****The runners-up will be ranked according to the number of points gained against the teams finishing first and third in their respective groups.*

### 3rd stage

The 20 countries will be drawn in five four-team round-robin groups, the winners**** of which will qualify for the finals.

*****If South Africa reach the 3rd stage and then win their group, the runners-up in that group will take the World Cup finals berth.*

Bobbing and weaving...Jamaica's Jermaine Taylor challenges Ali Gerba of Canada during the opening round of CONCACAF third stage matches

## ASIA

**4.5 finals berths**

### 1st stage

The 38 lowest-ranked countries of the 43 entrants were drawn in 19 two-leg ties. The eight lowest-ranked winners entered the 2nd stage; the other 11 winners went straight into the 3rd stage, to which Asia's top five seeds – Australia, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Iran – received a bye.

Bahrain v Malaysia
4-1, 0-0 (agg 4-1)
Bangladesh v Tajikistan
1-1, 0-5 (agg 1-6)
*Bhutan v Kuwait
Cambodia v Turkmenistan
0-1, 1-4 (agg 1-5)
China v Myanmar
7-0, 4-0 (agg 11-0)
East Timor v Hong Kong
2-3, 1-8 (agg 3-11)
**Guam v Indonesia
Kyrgyzstan v Jordan
2-0, 0-2 (aet) (agg 2-2; Jordan 6-5 on pens)
Lebanon v India
4-1, 2-2 (agg 6-3)
Mongolia v North Korea
1-4, 1-5 (agg 2-9)
Oman v Nepal
2-0, 2-0 (agg 4-0)
Pakistan v Iraq
0-7, 0-0 (agg 0-7)
Palestine v Singapore
0-4, 0-3 (awarded) (agg 0-7)
Sri Lanka v Qatar
0-1, 0-5 (agg 0-6)
Syria v Afghanistan
3-0, 2-1 (agg 5-1)
Thailand v Macao
6-1, 7-1 (agg 13-2)
Uzbekistan v Taiwan
9-0, 2-0 (agg 11-0)
Vietnam v United Arab Emirates
0-1, 0-5 (agg 0-6)
Yemen v Maldives
3-0, 0-2 (agg 3-2)

*1st legs - 08-22.10.07; 2nd legs - 15-30.10.07*

**Bhutan withdrew; Kuwait were given a bye*
***Guam withdrew; Indonesia were given a bye*

### 2nd stage

The eight lowest-ranked 1st stage winners were drawn in four two-leg ties, the winners of which advanced to the 3rd stage.

Hong Kong v Turkmenistan
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Indonesia v Syria
1-4, 0-7 (agg 1-11)
Singapore v Tajikistan
2-0, 1-1 (agg 3-1)
Yemen v Thailand
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)

*1st legs - 09/10.11.07; 2nd legs - 18.11.07*

### 3rd stage

The 20 countries played in five round-robin groups. The group winners and runners-up advanced to the 4th stage.

#### Group 1

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 10 |
| Qatar | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 10 |
| Iraq | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| China | 6 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 |

06.02.08 Australia-Qatar ..... 3-0
06.02.08 Iraq-China ..... 1-1
26.03.08 China-Australia ..... 0-0
26.03.08 Qatar-Iraq..... 2-0
01.06.08 Australia-Iraq..... 1-0
02.06.08 Qatar-China..... 0-0
07.06.08 China-Qatar..... 0-1
07.06.08 Iraq-Australia ..... 1-0
14.06.08 China-Iraq..... 1-2
14.06.08 Qatar-Australia..... 1-3
22.06.08 Australia-China ..... 0-1
22.06.08 Iraq-Qatar ..... 0-1

#### Group 2

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Japan | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 3 | 13 |
| Bahrain | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 11 |
| Oman | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 8 |
| Thailand | 6 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 14 | 1 |

06.02.08 Japan-Thailand..... 4-1
06.02.08 Oman-Bahrain..... 0-1
26.03.08 Bahrain-Japan ..... 1-0
26.03.08 Thailand-Oman ..... 0-1
02.06.08 Japan-Oman ..... 3-0
02.06.08 Thailand-Bahrain ..... 2-3
07.06.08 Bahrain-Thailand ..... 1-1
07.06.08 Oman-Japan ..... 1-1
14.06.08 Bahrain-Oman..... 1-1
14.06.08 Thailand-Japan..... 0-3
22.06.08 Japan-Bahrain ..... 1-0
22.06.08 Oman-Thailand ..... 2-1

#### Group 3

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South Korea | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 12 |
| North Korea | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 12 |
| Jordan | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| Turkmenistan | 6 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 12 | 1 |

06.02.08 Jordan-North Korea ..... 0-1
06.02.08 South Korea-Turkmenistan ..... 4-0
26.03.08 North Korea-South Korea..... 0-0
26.03.08 Turkmenistan-Jordan..... 0-2
31.05.08 South Korea-Jordan..... 2-2
02.06.08 Turkmenistan-North Korea ..... 0-0
07.06.08 Jordan-South Korea..... 0-1
07.06.08 North Korea-Turkmenistan ..... 1-0
14.06.08 North Korea-Jordan ..... 2-0
14.06.08 Turkmenistan-South Korea ..... 1-3
22.06.08 Jordan-Turkmenistan..... 2-0
22.06.08 South Korea-North Korea..... 0-0

#### Group 4

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 5 | 15 |
| Uzbekistan | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 15 | 7 | 15 |
| Singapore | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 13 | 6 |
| Lebanon | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 14 | 0 |

06.02.08 Lebanon-Uzbekistan ..... 0-1
06.02.08 Saudi Arabia-Singapore ..... 2-0
26.03.08 Singapore-Lebanon ..... 2-0
26.03.08 Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia..... 3-0
02.06.08 Saudi Arabia-Lebanon ..... 4-1
02.06.08 Singapore-Uzbekistan ..... 3-7
07.06.08 Lebanon-Saudi Arabia ..... 1-2
07.06.08 Uzbekistan-Singapore ..... 1-0
14.06.08 Singapore-Saudi Arabia ..... 0-2
14.06.08 Uzbekistan-Lebanon ..... 3-0
22.06.08 Lebanon-Singapore ..... 1-2
22.06.08 Saudi Arabia-Uzbekistan..... 4-0

#### Group 5

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Iran | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 12 |
| UAE | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| Syria | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| Kuwait | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 4 |

06.02.08 Iran-Syria ..... 0-0
06.02.08 UAE-Kuwait..... 2-0
26.03.08 Kuwait-Iran..... 2-2
26.03.08 Syria-UAE..... 1-1
02.06.08 Iran-UAE..... 0-0
02.06.08 Syria-Kuwait ..... 1-0
07.06.08 UAE-Iran..... 0-1
08.06.08 Kuwait-Syria ..... 4-2
14.06.08 Kuwait-UAE..... 2-3
14.06.08 Syria-Iran ..... 0-2
22.06.08 Iran-Kuwait ..... 2-0
22.06.08 UAE-Syria..... 1-3

### 4th stage

The 10 countries have been drawn in two round-robin groups, from which the winners and runners-up will qualify for the finals. The two third-placed countries will meet in a two-leg play-off, the winners of which will meet the Oceania section winners in a two-leg tie for a place in the finals.

#### Group 1

Australia
Bahrain
Japan
Qatar
Uzbekistan

06.09.08 Bahrain-Japan
06.09.08 Qatar-Uzbekistan

10.09.08 Qatar-Bahrain
10.09.08 Uzbekistan-Australia
15.10.08 Australia-Qatar
15.10.08 Japan-Uzbekistan
19.11.08 Bahrain-Australia
19.11.08 Qatar-Japan
11.02.09 Japan-Australia
11.02.09 Uzbekistan-Bahrain
28.03.09 Japan-Bahrain
28.03.09 Uzbekistan-Qatar
01.04.09 Australia-Uzbekistan
01.04.09 Bahrain-Qatar
06.06.09 Qatar-Australia
06.06.09 Uzbekistan-Japan
10.06.09 Australia-Bahrain
10.06.09 Japan-Qatar
17.06.09 Australia-Japan
17.06.09 Bahrain-Uzbekistan

### Group 2

Iran
North Korea
Saudi Arabia
South Korea
United Arab Emirates

06.09.08 Saudi Arabia-Iran
06.09.08 UAE-North Korea
10.09.08 North Korea-South Korea
10.09.08 UAE-Saudi Arabia
15.10.08 Iran-North Korea
15.10.08 South Korea-UAE
19.11.08 Saudi Arabia-South Korea
19.11.08 UAE-Iran
11.02.09 Iran-South Korea
11.02.09 North Korea-Saudi Arabia
28.03.09 Iran-Saudi Arabia
28.03.09 North Korea-UAE
01.04.09 Saudi Arabia-UAE
01.04.09 South Korea-North Korea
06.06.09 North Korea-Iran
06.06.09 UAE-South Korea
10.06.09 Iran-UAE
10.06.09 South Korea-Saudi Arabia
17.06.09 Saudi Arabia-North Korea
17.06.09 South Korea-Iran

## CONCACAF

**3.5 finals berths**

### 1st stage

The 22 lowest-ranked countries of the 35 entrants were drawn in 11 two-leg ties, however three of the games – Dominican Republic v Puerto Rico, Surinam v Montserrat and US Virgin Islands v Grenada – were then made single-leg ties only, because several of those countries did not have a stadium that met FIFA criteria. The winners advanced to the 2nd stage, to which the 13 highest-ranked countries received a bye.

Aruba v Antigua & Barbuda
0-3, 0-1 (agg 0-4)
Bahamas v British Virgin Islands
1-1, 2-2 (agg 3-3; Bahamas on away goals)
Belize v St Kitts & Nevis
3-1, 1-1 (agg 4-2)
Bermuda v Cayman Islands
1-1, 3-1 (agg 4-2)
Dominica v Barbados
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
El Salvador v Anguilla
12-0, 4-0 (agg 16-0)
Grenada v US Virgin Islands*
10-0
Montserrat v Surinam*
1-7
Nicaragua v Dutch Antilles
0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Puerto Rico v Dominican Republic*
1-0 (aet)
Turks & Caicos Islands v St Lucia
2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3)

*1st legs - 03/06.02.08 & 26.03.08;*
*2nd legs - 26-30.03.08*

**Single-leg games – 26.03.08*

### 2nd stage

The 24 countries were drawn in 12 two-leg ties, the winners of which advanced to the 3rd stage.

Antigua & Barbuda v Cuba
3-4, 0-4 (agg 3-8)
Belize v Mexico
0-2, 0-7 (agg 0-9)
Grenada v Costa Rica
2-2, 0-3 (agg 2-5)
Guatemala v St Lucia
6-0, 3-1 (agg 9-1)
Haiti v Dutch Antilles
0-0, 1-0 (agg 1-0)
Honduras v Puerto Rico
4-0, 2-2 (agg 6-2)
Jamaica v Bahamas
7-0, 6-0 (agg 13-0)
Panama v El Salvador
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
St Vincent & The Grenadines v Canada
0-3, 1-4 (agg 1-7)
Surinam v Guyana
1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1)
Trinidad & Tobago v Bermuda
1-2, 2-0 (agg 3-2)
United States v Barbados
8-0, 1-0 (agg 9-0)

*1st legs - 4-17.06.08; 2nd legs - 14-22.06.08*

### 3rd stage

The 12 countries are playing in three round-robin groups, from which the winners and runners-up will advance to the 4th stage.

#### Group 1

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trinidad & Tob | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| United States | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Guatemala | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Cuba | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |

20.08.08 Cuba-Trinidad & Tobago..... 1-3
20.08.08 Guatemala-United States..... 0-1
06.09.08 Cuba-United States
06.09.08 Trinidad & Tobago-Guatemala
10.09.08 Guatemala-Cuba
10.09.08 United States-Trinidad & Tob
11.10.08 Guatemala-Trinidad & Tobago
11.10.08 United States-Cuba
15.10.08 Cuba-Guatemala
15.10.08 Trinidad & Tob-United States
19.11.08 Trinidad & Tobago-Cuba
19.11.08 United States-Guatemala

#### Group 2

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mexico | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Canada | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Jamaica | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Honduras | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |

20.08.08 Canada-Jamaica..... 1-1
20.08.08 Mexico-Honduras..... 2-1
06.09.08 Canada-Honduras
06.09.08 Jamaica-Mexico
10.09.08 Honduras-Jamaica
10.09.08 Mexico-Canada
11.10.08 Honduras-Canada
11.10.08 Mexico-Jamaica
15.10.08 Canada-Mexico
15.10.08 Jamaica-Honduras
19.11.08 Honduras-Mexico
19.11.08 Jamaica-Canada

#### Group 3

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Costa Rica | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Haiti | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Surinam | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| El Salvador | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

20.08.08 Costa Rica-El Salvador ..... 1-0
20.08.08 Haiti-Surinam..... 2-2
06.09.08 Costa Rica-Surinam
06.09.08 El Salvador-Haiti
10.09.08 Haiti-Costa Rica
10.09.08 Surinam-El Salvador
11.10.08 Haiti-El Salvador
11.10.08 Surinam-Costa Rica
15.10.08 Costa Rica-Haiti
15.10.08 El Salvador-Surinam
19.11.08 El Salvador-Costa Rica
19.11.08 Surinam-Haiti

### 4th stage

The six countries will play in a single round-robin group. The top three will qualify for the finals. The fourth-placed country will meet the fifth-placed South American country in a two-leg tie for a place in the finals.

## EUROPE

**13 finals berths**

The 53 countries have been drawn in nine round-robin groups, the winners of which will qualify for the finals. The eight best runners-up will be drawn in four two-leg play-off ties, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals.

#### Group 1

Albania
Denmark
Hungary
Malta
Portugal
Sweden

06.09.08 Albania-Sweden
06.09.08 Hungary-Denmark
06.09.08 Malta-Portugal
10.09.08 Albania-Malta
10.09.08 Portugal-Denmark
10.09.08 Sweden-Hungary
11.10.08 Denmark-Malta
11.10.08 Hungary-Albania
11.10.08 Sweden-Portugal
15.10.08 Malta-Hungary
15.10.08 Portugal-Albania
11.02.09 Malta-Albania
28.03.09 Albania-Hungary
28.03.09 Malta-Denmark
28.03.09 Portugal-Sweden
01.04.09 Denmark-Albania
01.04.09 Hungary-Malta
06.06.09 Albania-Portugal
06.06.09 Sweden-Denmark
10.06.09 Sweden-Malta
05.09.09 Denmark-Portugal
05.09.09 Hungary-Sweden
09.09.09 Albania-Denmark
09.09.09 Hungary-Portugal
09.09.09 Malta-Sweden
10.10.09 Denmark-Sweden
10.10.09 Portugal-Hungary
14.10.09 Denmark-Hungary
14.10.09 Portugal-Malta
14.10.09 Sweden-Albania

#### Group 2

Greece
Israel
Latvia
Luxembourg
Moldova
Switzerland

06.09.08 Israel-Switzerland
06.09.08 Luxembourg-Greece
06.09.08 Moldova-Latvia
10.09.08 Latvia-Greece
10.09.08 Moldova-Israel
10.09.08 Switzerland-Luxembourg
11.10.08 Greece-Moldova
11.10.08 Luxembourg-Israel
11.10.08 Switzerland-Latvia
15.10.08 Greece-Switzerland
15.10.08 Latvia-Israel
15.10.08 Luxembourg-Moldova
28.03.09 Israel-Greece
28.03.09 Luxembourg-Latvia
28.03.09 Moldova-Switzerland
01.04.09 Greece-Israel
01.04.09 Latvia-Luxembourg
01.04.09 Switzerland-Moldova
05.09.09 Israel-Latvia
05.09.09 Moldova-Luxembourg
05.09.09 Switzerland-Greece
09.09.09 Israel-Luxembourg
09.09.09 Latvia-Switzerland
09.09.09 Moldova-Greece
10.10.09 Greece-Latvia
10.10.09 Israel-Moldova
10.10.09 Luxembourg-Switzerland
14.10.09 Greece-Luxembourg
14.10.09 Latvia-Moldova
14.10.09 Switzerland-Israel

#### Group 3

Czech Republic
Northern Ireland
Poland
San Marino
Slovakia
Slovenia

06.09.08 Poland-Slovenia
06.09.08 Slovakia-Northern Ireland
10.09.08 Northern Ireland-Czech Rep
10.09.08 San Marino-Poland
10.09.08 Slovenia-Slovakia
11.10.08 Poland-Czech Rep
11.10.08 San Marino-Slovakia
11.10.08 Slovenia-Northern Ireland
15.10.08 Czech Rep-Slovenia
15.10.08 Northern Ireland-San Marino
15.10.08 Slovakia-Poland
19.11.08 San Marino-Czech Rep
11.02.09 San Marino-Northern Ireland
28.03.09 Northern Ireland-Poland
28.03.09 Slovenia-Czech Rep
01.04.09 Czech Rep-Slovakia
01.04.09 Northern Ireland-Slovenia
01.04.09 Poland-San Marino
06.06.09 Slovakia-San Marino
19.08.09 Slovenia-San Marino
05.09.09 Poland-Northern Ireland
05.09.09 Slovakia-Czech Rep
09.09.09 Czech Rep-San Marino
09.09.09 Northern Ireland-Slovakia
09.09.09 Slovenia-Poland
10.10.09 Czech Rep-Poland
10.10.09 Slovakia-Slovenia
14.10.09 Czech Rep-Northern Ireland
14.10.09 Poland-Slovakia
14.10.09 San Marino-Slovenia

#### Group 4

Azerbaijan
Finland
Germany
Liechtenstein
Russia
Wales

06.09.08 Liechtenstein-Germany
06.09.08 Wales-Azerbaijan
10.09.08 Azerbaijan-Liechtenstein
10.09.08 Finland-Germany
10.09.08 Russia-Wales
11.10.08 Finland-Azerbaijan
11.10.08 Germany-Russia
11.10.08 Wales-Liechtenstein
15.10.08 Germany-Wales
15.10.08 Russia-Finland
28.03.09 Germany-Liechtenstein
28.03.09 Russia-Azerbaijan
28.03.09 Wales-Finland
01.04.09 Liechtenstein-Russia
01.04.09 Wales-Germany
06.06.09 Azerbaijan-Wales
06.06.09 Finland-Liechtenstein
10.06.09 Finland-Russia
19.08.09 Azerbaijan-Germany
05.09.09 Azerbaijan-Finland
05.09.09 Russia-Liechtenstein
09.09.09 Germany-Azerbaijan
09.09.09 Liechtenstein-Finland
09.09.09 Wales-Russia
10.10.09 Finland-Wales
10.10.09 Liechtenstein-Azerbaijan
10.10.09 Russia-Germany
14.10.09 Azerbaijan-Russia
14.10.09 Germany-Finland
14.10.09 Liechtenstein-Wales

#### Group 5

Armenia
Belgium
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Estonia
Spain
Turkey

06.09.08 Armenia-Turkey
06.09.08 Belgium-Estonia
06.09.08 Spain-Bosnia-Herzegovina
10.09.08 Bosnia-Herzegovina-Estonia
10.09.08 Spain-Armenia
10.09.08 Turkey-Belgium
11.10.08 Belgium-Armenia
11.10.08 Estonia-Spain
11.10.08 Turkey-Bosnia-Herzegovina
15.10.08 Belgium-Spain
15.10.08 Bosnia-Herzegovina-Armenia
15.10.08 Estonia-Turkey
28.03.09 Armenia-Estonia
28.03.09 Belgium-Bosnia-Herzegovina
28.03.09 Spain-Turkey
01.04.09 Bosnia-Herzegovina-Belgium
01.04.09 Estonia-Armenia
01.04.09 Turkey-Spain
05.09.09 Armenia-Bosnia-Herzegovina
05.09.09 Spain-Belgium
05.09.09 Turkey-Estonia
09.09.09 Armenia-Belgium
09.09.09 Bosnia-Herzegovina-Turkey
09.09.09 Spain-Estonia
10.10.09 Armenia-Spain
10.10.09 Belgium-Turkey
10.10.09 Estonia-Bosnia-Herzegovina
14.10.09 Bosnia-Herzegovina-Spain
14.10.09 Estonia-Belgium
14.10.09 Turkey-Armenia

#### Group 6

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kazakhstan | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Belarus | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Croatia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| England | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ukraine | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Andorra | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |

20.08.08 Kazakhstan-Andorra ..... 3-0
06.09.08 Andorra-England
06.09.08 Croatia-Kazakhstan
06.09.08 Ukraine-Belarus
10.09.08 Andorra-Belarus
10.09.08 Croatia-England
10.09.08 Kazakhstan-Ukraine
11.10.08 England-Kazakhstan
11.10.08 Ukraine-Croatia
15.10.08 Belarus-England
15.10.08 Croatia-Andorra
01.04.09 Andorra-Croatia
01.04.09 England-Ukraine
01.04.09 Kazakhstan-Belarus
06.06.09 Belarus-Andorra
06.06.09 Croatia-Ukraine
06.06.09 Kazakhstan-England
10.06.09 England-Andorra
10.06.09 Ukraine-Kazakhstan
19.08.09 Belarus-Croatia
05.09.09 Croatia-Belarus
05.09.09 Ukraine-Andorra
09.09.09 Andorra-Kazakhstan
09.09.09 Belarus-Ukraine
09.09.09 England-Croatia
10.10.09 Belarus-Kazakhstan
10.10.09 Ukraine-England
14.10.09 Andorra-Ukraine
14.10.09 England-Belarus
14.10.09 Kazakhstan-Croatia

#### Group 7

Austria
Faroe Islands
France
Lithuania
Romania
Serbia

06.09.08 Austria-France
06.09.08 Romania-Lithuania
06.09.08 Serbia-Faroe Islands
10.09.08 Faroe Islands-Romania
10.09.08 France-Serbia
10.09.08 Lithuania-Austria
11.10.08 Faroe Islands-Austria
11.10.08 Romania-France
11.10.08 Serbia-Lithuania
15.10.08 Austria-Serbia
15.10.08 Lithuania-Faroe Islands
28.03.09 Lithuania-France
28.03.09 Romania-Serbia
01.04.09 Austria-Romania
01.04.09 France-Lithuania
06.06.09 Lithuania-Romania
06.06.09 Serbia-Austria
10.06.09 Faroe Islands-Serbia
19.08.09 Faroe Islands-France
05.09.09 Austria-Faroe Islands
05.09.09 France-Romania
09.09.09 Faroe Islands-Lithuania
09.09.09 Romania-Austria
09.09.09 Serbia-France
10.10.09 Austria-Lithuania
10.10.09 France-Faroe Islands
10.10.09 Serbia-Romania
14.10.09 France-Austria
14.10.09 Lithuania-Serbia
14.10.09 Romania-Faroe Islands

#### Group 8

Bulgaria
Cyprus
Georgia
Italy
Montenegro
Republic of Ireland

06.09.08 Cyprus-Italy
06.09.08 Georgia-Rep Ireland
06.09.08 Montenegro-Bulgaria
10.09.08 Italy-Georgia
10.09.08 Montenegro-Rep Ireland
11.10.08 Bulgaria-Italy
11.10.08 Georgia-Cyprus
15.10.08 Georgia-Bulgaria
15.10.08 Italy-Montenegro
15.10.08 Rep Ireland-Cyprus
11.02.09 Rep Ireland-Georgia
28.03.09 Cyprus-Georgia
28.03.09 Montenegro-Italy
28.03.09 Rep Ireland-Bulgaria
01.04.09 Bulgaria-Cyprus
01.04.09 Georgia-Montenegro
01.04.09 Italy-Rep Ireland
06.06.09 Bulgaria-Rep Ireland
06.06.09 Cyprus-Montenegro
05.09.09 Bulgaria-Montenegro
05.09.09 Cyprus-Rep Ireland
05.09.09 Georgia-Italy
09.09.09 Italy-Bulgaria
09.09.09 Montenegro-Cyprus
10.10.09 Cyprus-Bulgaria
10.10.09 Montenegro-Georgia
10.10.09 Rep Ireland-Italy
14.10.09 Bulgaria-Georgia
14.10.09 Italy-Cyprus
14.10.09 Rep Ireland-Montenegro

#### Group 9

Holland
Iceland
Macedonia
Norway
Scotland

06.09.08 Macedonia-Scotland
06.09.08 Norway-Iceland
10.09.08 Iceland-Scotland
10.09.08 Macedonia-Holland
11.10.08 Holland-Iceland
11.10.08 Scotland-Norway
15.10.08 Iceland-Macedonia
15.10.08 Norway-Holland
28.03.09 Holland-Scotland
01.04.09 Holland-Macedonia
01.04.09 Scotland-Iceland
06.06.09 Iceland-Holland
06.06.09 Macedonia-Norway
10.06.09 Holland-Norway
10.06.09 Macedonia-Iceland
19.08.09 Norway-Scotland
05.09.09 Iceland-Norway
05.09.09 Scotland-Macedonia
09.09.09 Norway-Macedonia
09.09.09 Scotland-Holland

## OCEANIA

**0.5 finals berths**

### 1st stage

The nine-lowest ranked countries of the 10 entrants* played a preliminary qualifying competition. The countries finishing first, second and third advanced to the 2nd stage, to which New Zealand, Oceania's highest-ranked country, received a bye.

*Played in Apia, Samoa*

#### Group A

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fiji | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 25 | 1 | 10 |
| New Caledonia | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 10 |
| Tahiti | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| Cook Islands | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 3 |
| Tuvalu | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 22 | 1 |

25.08.07 Tahiti-New Caledonia..... 0-1
25.08.07 Fiji-Tuvalu ..... 16-0
27.08.07 New Caledonia-Tuvalu ..... 1-0
27.08.07 Fiji-Cook Islands ..... 4-0
29.08.07 Tahiti-Tuvalu ..... 1-1
29.08.07 New Caledonia-Cook Islands ... 3-0
01.09.07 Cook Islands-Tuvalu..... 4-1
01.09.07 Fiji-Tahiti ..... 4-0
03.09.07 Fiji-New Caledonia..... 1-1
03.09.07 Tahiti-Cook Islands ..... 1-0

#### Group B

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Solomon Is | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 1 | 12 |
| Vanuatu | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 23 | 3 | 9 |
| Samoa | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 6 |
| Tonga | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 3 |
| Amer. Samoa | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 38 | 0 |

25.08.07 Solomon Is-Amer. Samoa ..... 12-1
25.08.07 Samoa-Vanuatu ..... 0-4
27.08.07 Solomon Islands-Tonga ..... 4-0
27.08.07 Samoa-American Samoa ..... 7-0
29.08.07 Vanuatu-American Samoa ..... 15-0
29.08.07 Samoa-Tonga..... 2-1
01.09.07 Tonga-American Samoa ..... 4-0
01.09.07 Solomon Islands-Vanuatu ..... 2-0
03.09.07 Samoa-Solomon Islands ..... 0-3
03.09.07 Vanuatu-Tonga..... 4-1

#### Semi-finals

05.09.07 Solomon Is-New Caledonia..... 2-3
05.09.07 Fiji-Vanuatu..... 3-0

#### Third-place play-off

07.09.07 Solomon Is-Vanuatu..... 0-2

#### Final

07.09.07 New Caledonia-Fiji..... 1-0

**Tuvalu are not members of FIFA and could not enter the World Cup qualifying competition; they participated in the 1st stage tournament because it doubled as the South Pacific Games football competition.*

### 2nd stage

The four countries are playing in a single round-robin group. The group winners will meet the fifth-best Asian country in a two-leg tie for a place in the finals.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New Zealand | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 2 | 9 |
| New Caledonia | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 11 | 4 | 8 |
| Fiji | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 1 |
| Vanuatu | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 1 |

17.10.07 Fiji-New Zealand..... 0-2
17.11.07 Fiji-New Caledonia..... 3-3
17.11.07 Vanuatu-New Zealand ..... 1-2
21.11.07 New Caledonia-Fiji..... 4-0
21.11.07 New Zealand-Vanuatu ..... 4-1
14.06.08 Vanuatu-New Caledonia ..... 1-1
21.06.08 New Caledonia-Vanuatu ..... 3-0
06.09.08 Fiji-Vanuatu
06.09.08 New Caledonia-New Zealand
10.09.08 New Zealand-New Caledonia
10.09.08 Vanuatu-Fiji
19.11.08 New Zealand-Fiji

## SOUTH AMERICA

**4.5 finals berths**

The 10 countries are playing in a single round-robin group. The top four will qualify for the finals. The fifth-placed country will meet the fourth-placed CONCACAF country in a two-leg tie for a place in the finals.

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Paraguay | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 13 | 5 | 13 |
| Argentina | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 11 |
| Colombia | 6 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 10 |
| Chile | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 10 |
| Brazil | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 9 |
| Uruguay | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 15 | 6 | 8 |
| Venezuela | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 10 | 7 |
| Ecuador | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 5 |
| Bolivia | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 17 | 4 |
| Peru | 6 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 15 | 3 |

13.10.07 Argentina-Chile ..... 2-0
13.10.07 Ecuador-Venezuela ..... 0-1
13.10.07 Peru-Paraguay ..... 0-0
13.10.07 Uruguay-Bolivia ..... 5-0
14.10.07 Colombia-Brazil ..... 0-0
16.10.07 Venezuela-Argentina..... 0-2
17.10.07 Bolivia-Colombia..... 0-0
17.10.07 Brazil-Ecuador ..... 5-0
17.10.07 Chile-Peru..... 2-0
17.10.07 Paraguay-Uruguay ..... 1-0
17.11.07 Argentina-Bolivia ..... 3-0
17.11.07 Colombia-Venezuela ..... 1-0
17.11.07 Paraguay-Ecuador ..... 5-1
18.11.07 Peru-Brazil..... 1-1
18.11.07 Uruguay-Chile..... 2-2
20.11.07 Colombia-Argentina..... 2-1
20.11.07 Venezuela-Bolivia ..... 5-3
21.11.07 Brazil-Uruguay ..... 2-1
21.11.07 Chile-Paraguay ..... 0-3
21.11.07 Ecuador-Peru ..... 5-1
14.06.08 Peru-Colombia ..... 1-1
14.06.08 Uruguay-Venezuela..... 1-1
15.06.08 Argentina-Ecuador..... 1-1
15.06.08 Bolivia-Chile..... 0-2
15.06.08 Paraguay-Brazil ..... 2-0
17.06.08 Uruguay-Peru..... 6-0
18.06.08 Bolivia-Paraguay..... 4-2
18.06.08 Brazil-Argentina..... 0-0
18.06.08 Ecuador-Colombia..... 0-0
19.06.08 Venezuela-Chile ..... 2-3
06.09.08 Argentina-Paraguay
06.09.08 Colombia-Uruguay
06.09.08 Ecuador-Bolivia
06.09.08 Peru-Venezuela
07.09.08 Chile-Brazil
09.09.08 Paraguay-Venezuela
10.09.08 Brazil-Bolivia
10.09.08 Chile-Colombia
10.09.08 Peru-Argentina
10.09.08 Uruguay-Ecuador
11.10.08 Argentina-Uruguay
11.10.08 Bolivia-Peru
11.10.08 Colombia-Paraguay
12.10.08 Ecuador-Chile
12.10.08 Venezuela-Brazil
14.10.08 Bolivia-Uruguay
15.10.08 Brazil-Colombia
15.10.08 Chile-Argentina
15.10.08 Paraguay-Peru
15.10.08 Venezuela-Ecuador
28.03.09 Argentina-Venezuela
28.03.09 Colombia-Bolivia
28.03.09 Ecuador-Brazil
28.03.09 Peru-Chile
28.03.09 Uruguay-Paraguay
01.04.09 Bolivia-Argentina
01.04.09 Brazil-Peru
01.04.09 Chile-Uruguay
01.04.09 Ecuador-Paraguay
01.04.09 Venezuela-Colombia
06.06.09 Argentina-Colombia
06.06.09 Bolivia-Venezuela
06.06.09 Paraguay-Chile
06.06.09 Peru-Ecuador
06.06.09 Uruguay-Brazil
10.06.09 Brazil-Paraguay
10.06.09 Chile-Bolivia
10.06.09 Colombia-Peru
10.06.09 Ecuador-Argentina
10.06.09 Venezuela-Uruguay
05.09.09 Argentina-Brazil
05.09.09 Chile-Venezuela
05.09.09 Colombia-Ecuador
05.09.09 Paraguay-Bolivia
05.09.09 Peru-Uruguay
09.09.09 Bolivia-Ecuador
09.09.09 Brazil-Chile
09.09.09 Paraguay-Argentina
09.09.09 Uruguay-Colombia
09.09.09 Venezuela-Peru
10.10.09 Argentina-Peru
10.10.09 Bolivia-Brazil
10.10.09 Colombia-Chile
10.10.09 Ecuador-Uruguay
10.10.09 Venezuela-Paraguay
14.10.09 Brazil-Venezuela
14.10.09 Chile-Ecuador
14.10.09 Paraguay-Colombia
14.10.09 Peru-Bolivia
14.10.09 Uruguay-Argentina

● *Finals draw: December 4, 2009*

● *Finals to be held in South Africa from June 11 to July 11, 2010*

# FIXTURES

## ITALY

**Saturday, August 30, 2008**
Sampdoria v Inter
Udinese v Palermo

**Sunday, August 31**
Atalanta v Siena
Cagliari v Lazio
Catania v Genoa
Chievo v Reggina
Fiorentina v Juventus
Milan v Bologna
Roma v Napoli
Torino v Lecce

**Sunday, September 14**
Bologna v Atalanta
Genoa v Milan
Inter v Catania
Juventus v Udinese
Lazio v Sampdoria
Lecce v Chievo
Napoli v Fiorentina
Palermo v Roma
Reggina v Torino
Siena v Cagliari

**Sunday, September 21**
Cagliari v Juventus
Catania v Atalanta
Fiorentina v Bologna
Lecce v Siena
Milan v Lazio
Palermo v Genoa
Roma v Reggina
Sampdoria v Chievo
Torino v Inter
Udinese v Napoli

**Wednesday, September 24**
Atalanta v Cagliari
Bologna v Udinese
Chievo v Torino
Genoa v Roma
Inter v Lecce
Juventus v Catania
Lazio v Fiorentina
Napoli v Palermo
Reggina v Milan
Siena v Sampdoria

**Sunday, September 28**
Bologna v Napoli
Catania v Chievo
Fiorentina v Genoa
Lecce v Cagliari
Milan v Inter
Palermo v Reggina
Roma v Atalanta
Sampdoria v Juventus
Torino v Lazio
Udinese v Siena

**Sunday, October 5**
Atalanta v Sampdoria
Cagliari v Milan
Chievo v Fiorentina
Genoa v Napoli
Inter v Bologna
Juventus v Palermo
Lazio v Lecce
Reggina v Catania
Siena v Roma
Udinese v Torino

**Sunday, October 19**
Bologna v Lazio
Catania v Palermo
Chievo v Atalanta
Fiorentina v Reggina
Genoa v Siena
Lecce v Udinese
Milan v Sampdoria
Napoli v Juventus
Roma v Inter
Torino v Cagliari

**Sunday, October 26**
Atalanta v Milan
Cagliari v Chievo
Inter v Genoa
Juventus v Torino
Lazio v Napoli
Palermo v Fiorentina
Reggina v Lecce
Sampdoria v Bologna
Siena v Catania
Udinese v Roma

**Wednesday, October 29**
Bologna v Juventus
Catania v Udinese
Chievo v Lazio
Fiorentina v Inter
Genoa v Cagliari
Lecce v Palermo
Milan v Siena
Napoli v Reggina
Roma v Sampdoria
Torino v Atalanta

**Sunday, November 2**
Atalanta v Lecce
Cagliari v Bologna
Juventus v Roma
Lazio v Catania
Milan v Napoli
Palermo v Chievo
Reggina v Inter
Sampdoria v Torino
Siena v Fiorentina
Udinese v Genoa

**Sunday, November 9**
Bologna v Roma
Catania v Cagliari
Chievo v Juventus
Fiorentina v Atalanta
Genoa v Reggina
Inter v Udinese
Lazio v Siena
Lecce v Milan
Napoli v Sampdoria
Torino v Palermo

**Sunday, November 16**
Atalanta v Napoli
Cagliari v Fiorentina
Catania v Torino
Juventus v Genoa
Milan v Chievo
Palermo v Inter
Roma v Lazio
Sampdoria v Lecce
Siena v Bologna
Udinese v Reggina

**Sunday, November 23**
Bologna v Palermo
Chievo v Siena
Fiorentina v Udinese
Inter v Juventus
Lazio v Genoa
Lecce v Roma
Napoli v Cagliari
Reggina v Atalanta
Sampdoria v Catania
Torino v Milan

**Sunday, November 30**
Atalanta v Lazio
Cagliari v Sampdoria
Catania v Lecce
Genoa v Bologna
Inter v Napoli
Juventus v Reggina
Palermo v Milan
Roma v Fiorentina
Siena v Torino
Udinese v Chievo

**Sunday, December 7**
Atalanta v Udinese
Cagliari v Palermo
Chievo v Roma
Lazio v Inter
Lecce v Juventus
Milan v Catania
Napoli v Siena
Reggina v Bologna
Sampdoria v Genoa
Torino v Fiorentina

**Sunday, December 14**
Bologna v Torino
Fiorentina v Catania
Genoa v Atalanta
Inter v Chievo
Juventus v Milan
Napoli v Lecce
Palermo v Siena
Reggina v Sampdoria
Roma v Cagliari
Udinese v Lazio

**Sunday, December 21**
Atalanta v Juventus
Cagliari v Reggina
Catania v Roma
Chievo v Genoa
Lazio v Palermo
Lecce v Bologna
Milan v Udinese
Sampdoria v Fiorentina
Siena v Inter
Torino v Napoli

**Sunday, January 11, 2009**
Bologna v Chievo
Fiorentina v Lecce
Genoa v Torino
Inter v Cagliari
Juventus v Siena
Napoli v Catania
Palermo v Atalanta
Reggina v Lazio
Roma v Milan
Udinese v Sampdoria

**Sunday, January 18**
Atalanta v Inter
Cagliari v Udinese
Catania v Bologna
Chievo v Napoli
Lazio v Juventus
Lecce v Genoa
Milan v Fiorentina
Sampdoria v Palermo
Siena v Reggina
Torino v Roma

**Sunday, January 25**
Bologna v Milan
Genoa v Catania
Inter v Sampdoria
Juventus v Fiorentina
Lazio v Cagliari
Lecce v Torino
Napoli v Roma
Palermo v Udinese
Reggina v Chievo
Siena v Atalanta

**Wednesday, January 28**
Atalanta v Bologna
Cagliari v Siena
Catania v Inter
Chievo v Lecce
Fiorentina v Napoli
Milan v Genoa
Roma v Palermo
Sampdoria v Lazio
Torino v Reggina
Udinese v Juventus

**Sunday, February 1**
Atalanta v Catania
Bologna v Fiorentina
Chievo v Sampdoria
Genoa v Palermo
Inter v Torino
Juventus v Cagliari
Lazio v Milan
Napoli v Udinese
Reggina v Roma
Siena v Lecce

**Sunday, February 8**
Cagliari v Atalanta
Catania v Juventus
Fiorentina v Lazio
Lecce v Inter
Milan v Reggina
Palermo v Napoli
Roma v Genoa
Sampdoria v Siena
Torino v Chievo
Udinese v Bologna

**Sunday, February 15**
Atalanta v Roma
Cagliari v Lecce
Chievo v Catania
Genoa v Fiorentina
Inter v Milan
Juventus v Sampdoria
Lazio v Torino
Napoli v Bologna
Reggina v Palermo
Siena v Udinese

**Sunday, February 22**
Bologna v Inter
Catania v Reggina
Fiorentina v Chievo
Lecce v Lazio
Milan v Cagliari
Napoli v Genoa
Palermo v Juventus
Roma v Siena
Sampdoria v Atalanta
Torino v Udinese

**Sunday, March 1**
Atalanta v Chievo
Cagliari v Torino
Inter v Roma
Juventus v Napoli
Lazio v Bologna
Palermo v Catania
Reggina v Fiorentina
Sampdoria v Milan
Siena v Genoa
Udinese v Lecce

**Sunday, March 8**
Bologna v Sampdoria
Catania v Siena
Chievo v Cagliari
Fiorentina v Palermo
Genoa v Inter
Lecce v Reggina
Milan v Atalanta
Napoli v Lazio
Roma v Udinese
Torino v Juventus

**Sunday, March 15**
Atalanta v Torino
Cagliari v Genoa
Inter v Fiorentina
Juventus v Bologna
Lazio v Chievo
Palermo v Lecce
Reggina v Napoli
Sampdoria v Roma
Siena v Milan
Udinese v Catania

**Sunday, March 22**
Bologna v Cagliari
Catania v Lazio
Chievo v Palermo
Fiorentina v Siena
Genoa v Udinese
Inter v Reggina
Lecce v Atalanta
Napoli v Milan
Roma v Juventus
Torino v Sampdoria

**Sunday, April 5**
Atalanta v Fiorentina
Cagliari v Catania
Juventus v Chievo
Milan v Lecce
Palermo v Torino
Reggina v Genoa
Roma v Bologna
Sampdoria v Napoli
Siena v Lazio
Udinese v Inter

**Saturday, April 11**
Bologna v Siena
Chievo v Milan
Fiorentina v Cagliari
Genoa v Juventus
Inter v Palermo
Lazio v Roma
Lecce v Sampdoria
Napoli v Atalanta
Reggina v Udinese
Torino v Catania

**Sunday, April 19**
Atalanta v Reggina
Cagliari v Napoli
Catania v Sampdoria
Genoa v Lazio
Juventus v Inter
Milan v Torino
Palermo v Bologna
Roma v Lecce
Siena v Chievo
Udinese v Fiorentina

**Sunday, April 26**
Bologna v Genoa
Chievo v Udinese
Fiorentina v Roma
Lazio v Atalanta
Lecce v Catania
Milan v Palermo
Napoli v Inter
Reggina v Juventus
Sampdoria v Cagliari
Torino v Siena

**Sunday, May 3**
Bologna v Reggina
Catania v Milan
Fiorentina v Torino
Genoa v Sampdoria
Inter v Lazio
Juventus v Lecce
Palermo v Cagliari
Roma v Chievo
Siena v Napoli
Udinese v Atalanta

**Sunday, May 10**
Atalanta v Genoa
Cagliari v Roma
Catania v Fiorentina
Chievo v Inter
Lazio v Udinese
Lecce v Napoli
Milan v Juventus
Sampdoria v Reggina
Siena v Palermo
Torino v Bologna

**Sunday, May 17**
Bologna v Lecce
Fiorentina v Sampdoria
Genoa v Chievo
Inter v Siena
Juventus v Atalanta
Napoli v Torino
Palermo v Lazio
Reggina v Cagliari
Roma v Catania
Udinese v Milan

**Sunday, May 24**
Atalanta v Palermo
Cagliari v Inter
Catania v Napoli
Chievo v Bologna
Lazio v Reggina
Lecce v Fiorentina
Milan v Roma
Sampdoria v Udinese
Siena v Juventus
Torino v Genoa

**Sunday, May 31**
Bologna v Catania
Fiorentina v Milan
Genoa v Lecce
Inter v Atalanta
Juventus v Lazio
Napoli v Chievo
Palermo v Sampdoria
Reggina v Siena
Roma v Torino
Udinese v Cagliari

● Dates subject to change





## SPAIN

**Saturday, August 30, 2008**
Espanyol v Valladolid
Valencia v Mallorca

**Sunday, August 31**
Athletic Bilbao v Almeria
Atletico Madrid v Malaga
Betis v Recreativo
Sporting Gijon v Getafe
Racing Santander v Sevilla
Numancia v Barcelona
Deportivo La Coruna v Real Madrid
Osasuna v Villarreal

**Sunday, September 14**
Almeria v Valencia
Malaga v Athletic Bilbao
Valladolid v Atletico Madrid
Recreativo v Espanyol
Getafe v Betis
Sevilla v Sporting Gijon
Barcelona v Racing Santander
Real Madrid v Numancia
Villarreal v Deportivo La Coruna
Mallorca v Osasuna

**Sunday, September 21**
Almeria v Malaga
Athletic Bilbao v Valladolid
Atletico Madrid v Recreativo
Espanyol v Getafe
Betis v Sevilla
Sporting Gijon v Barcelona
Racing Santander v Real Madrid
Numancia v Villarreal
Deportivo La Coruna v Mallorca
Valencia v Osasuna

**Wednesday, September 24**
Malaga v Valencia
Valladolid v Almeria
Recreativo v Athletic Bilbao
Getafe v Atletico Madrid
Sevilla v Espanyol
Barcelona v Betis
Real Madrid v Sporting Gijon
Villarreal v Racing Santander
Mallorca v Numancia
Osasuna v Deportivo La Coruna

**Sunday, September 28**
Malaga v Valladolid
Almeria v Recreativo
Athletic Bilbao v Getafe
Atletico Madrid v Sevilla
Espanyol v Barcelona
Betis v Real Madrid
Sporting Gijon v Villarreal
Racing Santander v Mallorca
Numancia v Osasuna
Valencia v Deportivo La Coruna

**Sunday, October 5**
Valladolid v Valencia
Recreativo v Malaga
Getafe v Almeria
Sevilla v Athletic Bilbao
Barcelona v Atletico Madrid
Real Madrid v Espanyol
Villarreal v Betis
Mallorca v Sporting Gijon
Osasuna v Racing Santander
Deportivo La Coruna v Numancia

**Sunday, October 19**
Valladolid v Recreativo
Malaga v Getafe
Almeria v Sevilla
Athletic Bilbao v Barcelona
Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid
Espanyol v Villarreal
Betis v Mallorca
Sporting Gijon v Osasuna
Racing Santander v Deportivo La Coruna
Valencia v Numancia

**Sunday, October 26**
Recreativo v Valencia
Getafe v Valladolid
Sevilla v Malaga
Barcelona v Almeria
Real Madrid v Athletic Bilbao
Villarreal v Atletico Madrid
Mallorca v Espanyol
Osasuna v Betis
Deportivo La Coruna v Sporting Gijon
Numancia v Racing Santander

**Sunday, November 2**
Recreativo v Getafe
Valladolid v Sevilla
Malaga v Barcelona
Almeria v Real Madrid
Athletic Bilbao v Villarreal
Atletico Madrid v Mallorca
Espanyol v Osasuna
Betis v Deportivo La Coruna
Sporting Gijon v Numancia
Valencia v Racing Santander

**Sunday, November 9**
Getafe v Valencia
Sevilla v Recreativo
Barcelona v Valladolid
Real Madrid v Malaga
Villarreal v Almeria
Mallorca v Athletic Bilbao
Osasuna v Atletico Madrid
Deportivo La Coruna v Espanyol
Numancia v Betis
Racing Santander v Sporting Gijon

**Sunday, November 16**
Getafe v Sevilla
Recreativo v Barcelona
Valladolid v Real Madrid
Malaga v Villarreal
Almeria v Mallorca
Athletic Bilbao v Osasuna
Atletico Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna
Espanyol v Numancia
Betis v Racing Santander
Valencia v Sporting Gijon

**Sunday, November 23**
Sevilla v Valencia
Barcelona v Getafe
Real Madrid v Recreativo
Villarreal v Valladolid
Mallorca v Malaga
Osasuna v Almeria
Deportivo La Coruna v Athletic Bilbao
Numancia v Atletico Madrid
Racing Santander v Espanyol
Sporting Gijon v Betis

**Sunday, November 30**
Sevilla v Barcelona
Getafe v Real Madrid
Recreativo v Villarreal
Valladolid v Mallorca
Malaga v Osasuna
Almeria v Deportivo La Coruna
Athletic Bilbao v Numancia
Atletico Madrid v Racing Santander
Espanyol v Sporting Gijon
Valencia v Betis

**Sunday, December 7**
Barcelona v Valencia
Real Madrid v Sevilla
Villarreal v Getafe
Mallorca v Recreativo
Osasuna v Valladolid
Deportivo La Coruna v Malaga
Numancia v Almeria
Racing Santander v Athletic Bilbao
Sporting Gijon v Atletico Madrid
Betis v Espanyol

**Sunday, December 14**
Barcelona v Real Madrid
Sevilla v Villarreal
Getafe v Mallorca
Recreativo v Osasuna
Valladolid v Deportivo La Coruna
Malaga v Numancia
Almeria v Racing Santander
Athletic Bilbao v Sporting Gijon
Atletico Madrid v Betis
Valencia v Espanyol

**Sunday, December 21**
Real Madrid v Valencia
Villarreal v Barcelona
Mallorca v Sevilla
Osasuna v Getafe
Deportivo La Coruna v Recreativo
Numancia v Valladolid
Racing Santander v Malaga
Sporting Gijon v Almeria
Betis v Athletic Bilbao
Espanyol v Atletico Madrid

**Sunday, January 4, 2009**
Almeria v Betis
Athletic Bilbao v Espanyol
Valencia v Atletico Madrid
Real Madrid v Villarreal
Barcelona v Mallorca
Sevilla v Osasuna
Getafe v Deportivo La Coruna
Recreativo v Numancia
Valladolid v Racing Santander
Malaga v Sporting Gijon

**Sunday, January 11**
Valencia v Villarreal
Mallorca v Real Madrid
Osasuna v Barcelona
Deportivo La Coruna v Sevilla
Numancia v Getafe
Racing Santander v Recreativo
Sporting Gijon v Valladolid
Betis v Malaga
Espanyol v Almeria
Atletico Madrid v Athletic Bilbao

**Sunday, January 18**
Villarreal v Mallorca
Real Madrid v Osasuna
Barcelona v Deportivo La Coruna
Sevilla v Numancia
Getafe v Racing Santander
Recreativo v Sporting Gijon
Valladolid v Betis
Malaga v Espanyol
Almeria v Atletico Madrid
Athletic Bilbao v Valencia

**Sunday, January 25**
Almeria v Athletic Bilbao
Malaga v Atletico Madrid
Valladolid v Espanyol
Recreativo v Betis
Getafe v Sporting Gijon
Sevilla v Racing Santander
Barcelona v Numancia
Real Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna
Villarreal v Osasuna
Mallorca v Valencia

**Sunday, February 1**
Valencia v Almeria
Athletic Bilbao v Malaga
Atletico Madrid v Valladolid
Espanyol v Recreativo
Betis v Getafe
Sporting Gijon v Sevilla
Racing Santander v Barcelona
Numancia v Real Madrid
Deportivo La Coruna v Villarreal
Osasuna v Mallorca

**Sunday, February 8**
Malaga v Almeria
Valladolid v Athletic Bilbao
Recreativo v Atletico Madrid
Getafe v Espanyol
Sevilla v Betis
Barcelona v Sporting Gijon
Real Madrid v Racing Santander
Villarreal v Numancia
Mallorca v Deportivo La Coruna
Osasuna v Valencia

**Sunday, February 15**
Valencia v Malaga
Almeria v Valladolid
Athletic Bilbao v Recreativo
Atletico Madrid v Getafe
Espanyol v Sevilla
Betis v Barcelona
Sporting Gijon v Real Madrid
Racing Santander v Villarreal
Numancia v Mallorca
Deportivo La Coruna v Osasuna

**Sunday, February 22**
Valladolid v Malaga
Recreativo v Almeria
Getafe v Athletic Bilbao
Sevilla v Atletico Madrid
Barcelona v Espanyol
Real Madrid v Betis
Villarreal v Sporting Gijon
Mallorca v Racing Santander
Osasuna v Numancia
Deportivo La Coruna v Valencia

**Sunday, March 1**
Valencia v Valladolid
Malaga v Recreativo
Almeria v Getafe
Athletic Bilbao v Sevilla
Atletico Madrid v Barcelona
Espanyol v Real Madrid
Betis v Villarreal
Sporting Gijon v Mallorca
Racing Santander v Osasuna
Numancia v Deportivo La Coruna

**Sunday, March 8**
Recreativo v Valladolid
Getafe v Malaga
Sevilla v Almeria
Barcelona v Athletic Bilbao
Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid
Villarreal v Espanyol
Mallorca v Betis
Osasuna v Sporting Gijon
Deportivo La Coruna v Racing Santander
Numancia v Valencia

**Sunday, March 15**
Valencia v Recreativo
Valladolid v Getafe
Malaga v Sevilla
Almeria v Barcelona
Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid
Atletico Madrid v Villarreal
Espanyol v Mallorca
Betis v Osasuna
Sporting Gijon v Deportivo La Coruna
Racing Santander v Numancia

**Sunday, March 22**
Getafe v Recreativo
Sevilla v Valladolid
Barcelona v Malaga
Real Madrid v Almeria
Villarreal v Athletic Bilbao
Mallorca v Atletico Madrid
Osasuna v Espanyol
Deportivo La Coruna v Betis
Numancia v Sporting Gijon
Racing Santander v Valencia

**Sunday, April 5**
Valencia v Getafe
Recreativo v Sevilla
Valladolid v Barcelona
Malaga v Real Madrid
Almeria v Villarreal
Athletic Bilbao v Mallorca
Atletico Madrid v Osasuna
Espanyol v Deportivo La Coruna
Betis v Numancia
Sporting Gijon v Racing Santander

**Sunday, April 12**
Sevilla v Getafe
Barcelona v Recreativo
Real Madrid v Valladolid
Villarreal v Malaga
Mallorca v Almeria
Osasuna v Athletic Bilbao
Deportivo La Coruna v Atletico Madrid
Numancia v Espanyol
Racing Santander v Betis
Sporting Gijon v Valencia

**Sunday, April 19**
Valencia v Sevilla
Getafe v Barcelona
Recreativo v Real Madrid
Valladolid v Villarreal
Malaga v Mallorca
Almeria v Osasuna
Athletic Bilbao v Deportivo La Coruna
Atletico Madrid v Numancia
Espanyol v Racing Santander
Betis v Sporting Gijon

**Wednesday, April 22**
Barcelona v Sevilla
Real Madrid v Getafe
Villarreal v Recreativo
Mallorca v Valladolid
Osasuna v Malaga
Deportivo La Coruna v Almeria
Numancia v Athletic Bilbao
Racing Santander v Atletico Madrid
Sporting Gijon v Espanyol
Betis v Valencia

**Sunday, April 26**
Valencia v Barcelona
Sevilla v Real Madrid
Getafe v Villarreal
Recreativo v Mallorca
Valladolid v Osasuna
Malaga v Deportivo La Coruna
Almeria v Numancia
Athletic Bilbao v Racing Santander
Atletico Madrid v Sporting Gijon
Espanyol v Betis

**Sunday, May 3**
Real Madrid v Barcelona
Villarreal v Sevilla
Mallorca v Getafe
Osasuna v Recreativo
Deportivo La Coruna v Valladolid
Numancia v Malaga
Racing Santander v Almeria
Sporting Gijon v Athletic Bilbao
Betis v Atletico Madrid
Espanyol v Valencia

**Sunday, May 10**
Valencia v Real Madrid
Barcelona v Villarreal
Sevilla v Mallorca
Getafe v Osasuna
Recreativo v Deportivo La Coruna
Valladolid v Numancia
Malaga v Racing Santander
Almeria v Sporting Gijon
Athletic Bilbao v Betis
Atletico Madrid v Espanyol

**Sunday, May 17**
Villarreal v Real Madrid
Mallorca v Barcelona
Osasuna v Sevilla
Deportivo La Coruna v Getafe
Numancia v Recreativo
Racing Santander v Valladolid
Sporting Gijon v Malaga
Betis v Almeria
Espanyol v Athletic Bilbao
Atletico Madrid v Valencia

**Sunday, May 24**
Villarreal v Valencia
Real Madrid v Mallorca
Barcelona v Osasuna
Sevilla v Deportivo La Coruna
Getafe v Numancia
Recreativo v Racing Santander
Valladolid v Sporting Gijon
Malaga v Betis
Almeria v Espanyol
Athletic Bilbao v Atletico Madrid

**Sunday, May 31**
Mallorca v Villarreal
Osasuna v Real Madrid
Deportivo La Coruna v Barcelona
Numancia v Sevilla
Racing Santander v Getafe
Sporting Gijon v Recreativo
Betis v Valladolid
Espanyol v Malaga
Atletico Madrid v Almeria
Valencia v Athletic Bilbao

● Dates subject to change

# Famous Last Words

## Who said what and why

***"This weekend the French championship starts up. The most boring in Europe."***

An insulting but not wholly inaccurate take by Spanish sports daily *Marca* on a league in which the aim of most coaches is not to lose.

**"I'm like Luca Toni, a penalty-box player. I don't promise goals, just lots of willingness and aggression."**
Tulio De Melo, Palermo's new Brazilian striker, sends out a mixed message.

**"Music lovers go to concerts but never the rehearsals."**
Ralf Rangnick, the coach of promoted Bundesliga side 1899 Hoffenheim, bans spectators from training sessions.

**"The problem exists but no one really wants to do anything about it."**
Sergio Campana, head of the Italian players' union, is despondent about the arrival of 50 new foreigners in Serie A.

**"People who think a coach, and me in particular, can be supervised are either stupid or totally lacking in logical thought."**
France boss Raymond Domenech responds to claims that his new assistant, former international midfielder Alain Boghossian, is there to keep him in check.

**"On the federation executive committee sit corrupt individuals. In spite of that they rule without end."**
Former Polish international great Zibi Boniek has no doubt about who to blame for the organisational chaos in the Polish League following the country's match-fixing scandal.

Cry for help... Maradona believes River Plate should stand by troubled Ortega

Different story... Leiweke (centre) welcomes Lalas and Gullit to LA Galaxy last November

**"We didn't decide against Herzog but rather in favour of Bruckner."**
Austrian federation chief Friedrich Stickler defends the choice of veteran Czech Karel Bruckner to lead the national team rather than Andreas Herzog, the popular assistant to Josef Hickersberger, who led Austria during this summer's European Championship.

**"Leaving him out or releasing him is not the correct solution. Here, we have to help the person."**
Diego Maradona criticises the decision of River Plate to offload playmaker Ariel Ortega to second division Independiente Rivadavia because of his alcohol problem.

**"Unfortunately, you can't fire 22 players."**
Tim Leiweke, the chief executive of AEG, the owner of underachieving Los Angeles Galaxy, explains the sacking of general manager Alexi Lalas and coach Ruud Gullit.

**"I'm annoyed when I go each week to fill up with petrol. The petrol mafia are taking the money I need to give to my players. I'm disgusted and it's because of Mr Abramovich. We have to beat teams like Chelsea on the pitch – that will be our compensation."**
Bayern Munich general manager Uli Hoeness launches an extraordinary attack on Chelsea's oligarch owner.

**"I was surprised that it was so easy and that I still have my pace. But willpower helps a lot."**
Marc Overmars on his comeback with Dutch second level side Go Ahead Eagles, four years after retiring.

**"I gave my all at West Ham and enjoyed my time there but the decision is the best for both of us."**
Freddie Ljungberg is happy to go on his way – with a £4million pay-off.

Decision day...Ljungberg

NEXT MONTH OCTOBER ISSUE ON SALE SEPTEMBER 26

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